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Wars: Shadows of the Empire

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Of LucasArts' Latest
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SO MANY



The waiting is over. Nintendo 64® is finally here, on the shelf, waiting for you to snatch it up. But what's the big deal, you're probably asking yourself. It took long enough. Was the wait worth it? You bet, and here's why.

The Nintendo 64 controller is the most revolutionary video game interaction device ever. It all starts with the analog Control Stick. Unlike the traditional all-or-nothing digital Control Pad (it's got one of those too), the analog Control Stick is sensitive to even the slightest movement. Move it a little to make Mario tiptoe. Crank on it and watch him take off in a full-tilt sprint. Best of all, the Control Stick gives you 360 degrees of control. The three grips on the controller let you hold the controller three different ways, depending on what works best for the game you are playing. For saving your records and high scores, the controller has a handy slot for your personal Memory Pak. Now when you go to your friend's house for some multi-player action, you can bring all your personal data with you, snug

inside your favorite color controller (it comes in six stylin' colors).



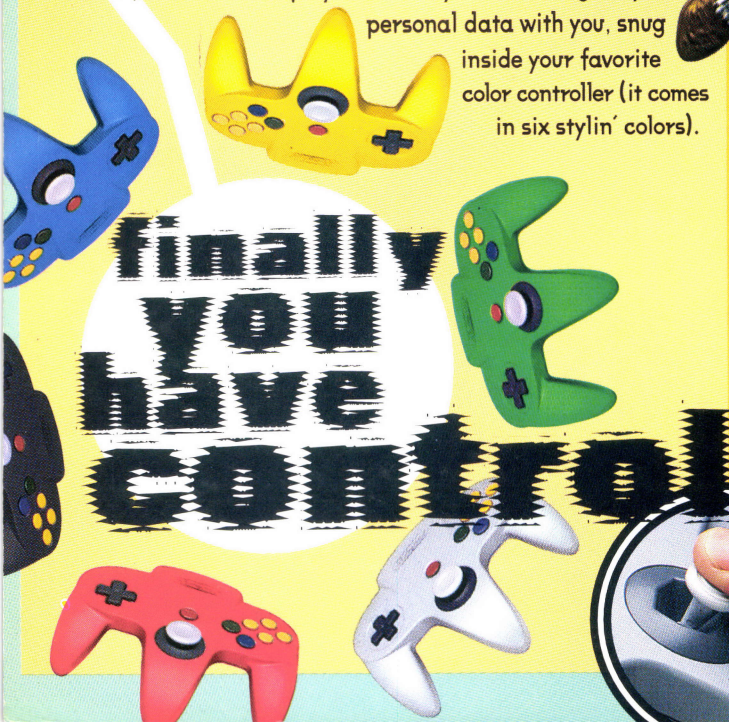
If you're going to invest your hard-earned (or mooched) cash in a video game system, you want to be sure you can play plenty of great games on it. Not an issue. There are over 50 titles in development for N64 covering all gaming categories, from action to role-playing, sports, fighting, simulation, puzzles, you name it. Furthermore, these are not titles that will wind up in the bargain bin after a month, because

Nintendo and the exclusive N64 Dream Team developers are dedicated to producing cutting-edge software that takes full advantage of the Nintendo 64's incredible technology. A few of the first wave of titles include

Super Mario 64™
PilotWings 64™
Wave Race 64™
Killer Instinct®Gold,

what's up our sleeve.

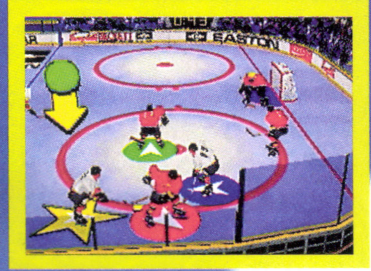
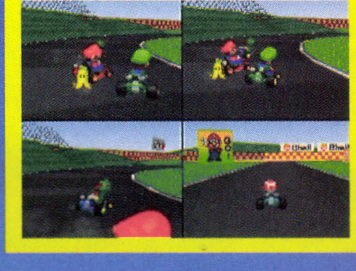
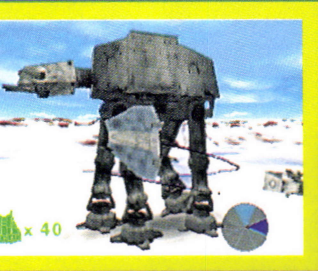
It gets better. Most new gaming technology looks cool when it first comes out, but by the time you get it home, something bigger and badder is on the way. Fortunately, the Nintendo 64 was designed with maximum capability for future upgrades in mind. Four controller ports mean four-player gaming from the get-go. Expansion ports allow for more system RAM and new peripherals (can you say readable-writable storage media?). The bottom line: The Nintendo 64 is currently the most advanced video game system ever, and it is the only system that is designed to change with technology.



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GAMES... SO FEW THUMBS.



Super Mario Kart R™ Wayne Gretzky's 3-D Hockey™ and Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire™. Most importantly, these and the many other titles on the way all must meet Nintendo's high standards of

fun and quality before they hit the shelf. What more do you need to know about the Nintendo 64 software library beyond that?



Shablas N64?

Anti-aliasing Makes great transparency effects. For example, objects seen through water look different than objects seen through air.

CPU Central processing unit. 64 bits means fast and powerful. **Reality Co-processor** The heart and soul of the N64. A 64-bit custom chip from Silicon Graphics that performs all graphics and audio processing.

Trilinear MIP-map interpolation Subtly blends colors and patterns of texture maps to make objects more realistic even as they move closer to you. **Microcode** Custom CPU control instructions optimized for audio, lighting, graphic details and other ultrarealistic effects. **Texture mapping** Puts a bitmapped picture or texture onto a surface. In other words, a brick wall looks like a brick wall, not like a blank one. **Wavetable synthesis** Dynamic high-fidelity sounds. Found in pricey multimedia PCs. **Z-Buffer** Keeps stuff in the right place even if you're moving quickly. Objects maintain their true spatial relationships.



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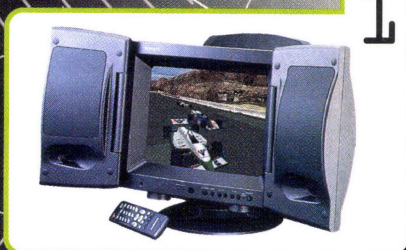
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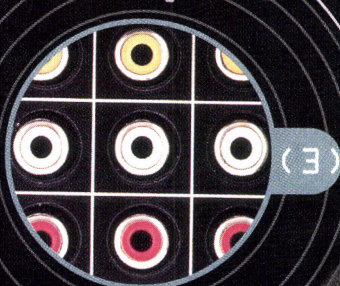
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As we go to press, we're a mere three days away from the long-awaited North American launch of the Nintendo 64. Avid gamers have been waiting for over three years to get their hands on the newest Nintendo sensation (it was first announced back in August of 1993), and when the system is finally let loose on Sept. 29, that long wait will finally be over. By the time you read this, in fact, the chances are overwhelmingly high that you've at the very least seen the system on display at one of the major gaming retail outlets like Toys 'R' Us or The Electronics Boutique, if you haven't purchased one already. The hype being generated by the system is just unbelievable, and Nintendo is putting more money into promoting it than any other product they've ever released. Obviously, it's working, as we've heard reports from presell chains like EB and Babbage's of anywhere up to and exceeding 1,000 preorders nationwide *per day*. These numbers are astoundingly high, and are toppling the numbers that Sony set last year when the PlayStation was released—numbers that, at the time, many thought would be impossible to top. More important than the advertising blitz, though, is the fact that the games available for the system are downright amazing, not only in graphical presentation, but in game-play as well.

Amidst all this hype and hysteria, however, there are plenty of pessimistic gamers who'll prefer to stay away from the N64 for various reasons. The main argument against the system, as everybody knows, is the fact that it's cartridge-based, whereas the Saturn and PlayStation offer the benefits of the huge storage space of CDs. Additionally, cartridges are much more expensive to produce, and therefore gamers will have to pay abnormally high prices to get the games they want to play. The 64DD is expected to help solve these problems when it finally hits the shelves sometime in 1997, but it still won't have nearly as much storage space as a compact disc (assuming the current technical specifications don't change), and one must wonder how many people are willing to spring for another add-on after getting burned by previous failures like the Sega CD and 32X.

These arguments against the Nintendo 64 are certainly valid, but what it all boils down to is whether or not the games are worth purchasing, and frankly, I think we all know the answer to that question. Super Mario 64 is easily one of the best games ever made, and despite it being on a "tiny" 64-Megabit cart, it's far better than any CD game in existence. Will it sell systems? Yep. Does that mean a system can thrive on one game alone? Certainly not. However, Mario is just the beginning. Our feature review this month, WaveRace 64, is as revolutionary to racing games as Mario is to traditional platformers, and while it's only one of the few games available this year, it's a good sign of things to come. Naysayers seem to forget that the Super NES launched with a similar lack of early titles back in '91, and yet now, five years later, the system is still going strong with a worldwide installed userbase somewhere in the tens of millions, and a collection of must-have games that will forever be remembered as all-time classics.

However, with all this talk about Nintendo, what about Sony and Sega? How will they be affected by the N64's entrance into the heated next-generation system wars? The answer is unclear at the moment, but quite honestly, with such a crowded marketplace, someone is going to get hurt, and both Sony and Sega want you to believe that it's not going to be them. Some speculate that Sony is more concerned with quantity than they are with quality, while others feel that Sega has goofed up one too many times with consumers (can you say 32X?) to be able to withstand the brunt of Nintendo's latest attack. As is always the case, however, time will ultimately tell the outcome of the fierce war that's about to take place. Thankfully, we, as gamers, are going to be the ones who benefit the most from it.

—John Ricciardi, Senior Editor

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November, 1996

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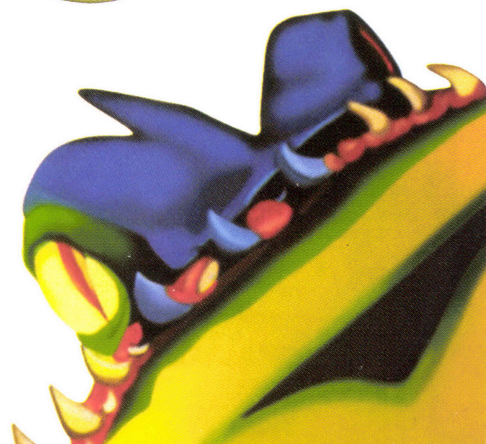
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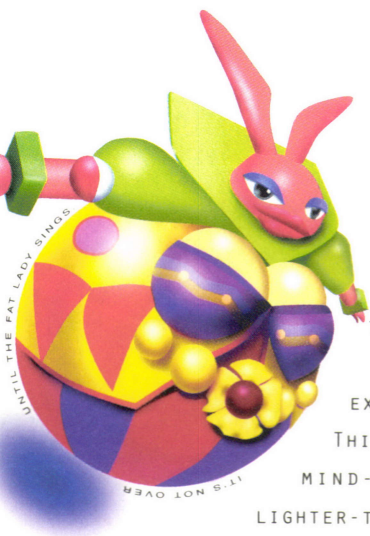
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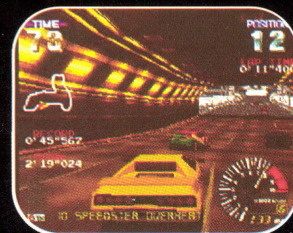
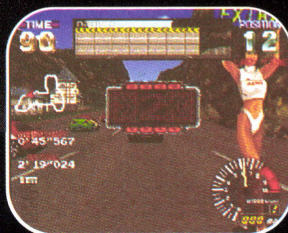


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▶ This month's cover was rendered especially for IG by Studio Archetype, courtesy of Nintendo of America Inc.



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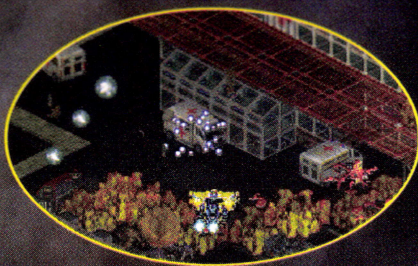
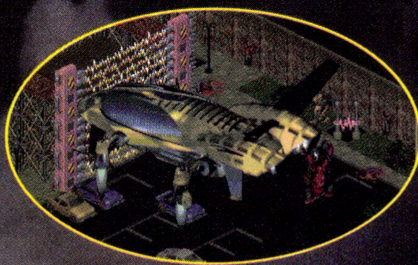
Reviews at a Glance

- 109 A summary of the ratings given to games reviewed in past issues of IG, plus five new mini-reviews.



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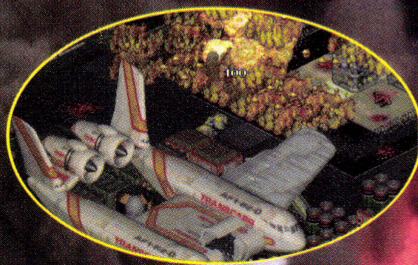
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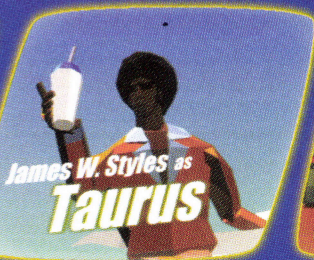
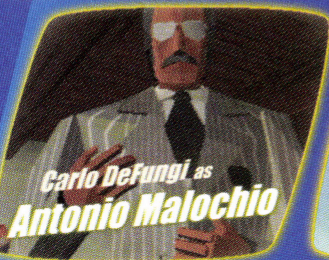
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Available on Windows®95 CD-ROM



Ever since purchasing my first game system in 1985 (okay, I was 10, my mother bought it), I've been searching for an exceptional baseball game. Last year I purchased World Series Baseball for the Saturn, and loved it, but it was indeed lacking in many areas. Now, nearly 10 months after purchasing the first World Series Baseball, I've again caved in and bought its sequel, World Series Baseball 2. Unfortunately, that feeling of emptiness is still with me. Sega has made a great game in WSB2, but the changes/additions don't go far enough. If you owned the first Saturn WSB, then playing the second one will leave you thinking "World Series Baseball Remix?" It does have all 28 stadiums, and indeed all of the real players are here, along with many great game-play alterations, but it's as if Sega stopped short. All you need to do is play Bottom of the Ninth by Konami, or the Genesis version of World Series Baseball '96 to see what's missing.

The batting interface has got to be made more like World Series Baseball '95 and '96 on the Genesis. Keeping the Saturn look and feel is fine, but to become immersed in a baseball game, one needs more options in batting than moving around in a batter's box. You've got to have the added risk of Power Swings, the double play

"To become immersed in a baseball game, one needs more options in batting than simply moving around in a batter's box."

risk in Pull-type swings and the safety of normal and cautious swings to impact on a person's enjoyment of the game. In addition, one should also be able to select the height of their swing. I'm not saying that the next Saturn World Series game should be a strict simulation, but these aspects simply should be in any baseball game.

The second major change that must happen is in the computer AI. For example, I applaud Sega for making bunts more effective and realistic, but they went too far. Ninety-five percent of bunts move the runner over now, and yet it seems like less than one percent result in base hits. In addition, one shouldn't be able to fool the CPU when it comes to moving a runner



Sega's latest baseball game might be more aptly titled "World Series Baseball Remix," according to loyal IG reader Frank Provo. While we agree with him on many of his points, we still play the hell out of the game.

to second by faking a run home with the man on third. I've gotten countless doubles from fooling the CPU, and it's got to be fixed.

Another necessary change lies in pitching. A fastball, curve, forkball and "normal" pitch are simply not enough. Somehow a slider, and other skill-style pitches have to be added. In addition, being able to choose the corner you're going to pitch to should be considered. Wild pitches, passed balls, warm-up pitches and "called" intentional walks would also be nice.

Looking at the "necessary" changes I've outlined above, one

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Frank Provo
Seattle, WA

[Ed.: Well, well! We could've done a huge review of WSB2, but with readers like these, who needs writers? But seriously, you bring up quite a few valid points about the game and we'll forward your comments to the game's developers at SOA. If anyone can make a difference, it's them...

Why is it that while we gamers support the industry with our cash, we have no say in it? For example, when a new X-Bit system comes out, the industry deems any system(s) before it obsolete and no longer worth any further support. Who decides this? Does the industry think ALL gamers only want the new systems supported? I don't think so! No other industry does this except for the video game industry. When a new make of car comes out, does an auto dealer now only sell that one car? No, the dealer still continues to sell and support the older makes of cars along with the new models. Or look at music. When a new style of music comes out, it does not replace what has come before it. If the music industry was like the video game industry, we'd all ONLY be listening to Pop/Top 40 music. Classical, Jazz, New Age and other styles of music would now be obsolete. Why must the industry support only what is current? Why not support gaming in general? Not all gamers play on what is current. Many of us STILL PLAY AND ENJOY our Atari 2600s, Intellivisions and ColecoVisions as well. Hell, if they were being made, I'd STILL be buying games for my Atari 2600, Lynx and NES systems. And if I had my say, the industry would STILL be supporting these and other classic systems. It seems the only thing the video game industry cares about is how much cash it can take out of gamers' pockets. How soon will it be until the industry deems the PlayStation, Saturn and Nintendo 64 obsolete so that it can hype the next new system? I think VERY soon, and I don't even care. I'll go on playing and enjoying my Atari 2600, Lynx, NES and Genesis. But now seeing how the industry is, I will no longer support it by blindly



James Catalano enjoys his classic systems more than his Sony PlayStation, and predicts that he will ignore the Nintendo 64 too. That'll take a lot of discipline.

THIS MAN WANTS TO
SAVE HUMANITY.



RobotronX.
The Third Dimension Of Excitement.

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Williams 
Williams Entertainment Inc.

following the hype and buying the next system that will be obsolete as soon as I get it home from the store. Gee, I can only hope for another crash that the industry will NEVER recover from.

James Catalano
lynx@ripco2.ripco.com

[Ed: It all depends on what you consider to be "the industry." You mention it quite a few times, but if you're talking about the companies who manufacture these systems, then you have to understand that it's only natural for a company to release improved hardware every now and then as the technology advances and, more importantly, development costs decrease. Admittedly, it's not like it used to be. The NES, for example, was alive and well for almost eight years before it finally retired, and the Super NES almost as long, while on the other hand, there was talk of a PlayStation 2 before the first PlayStation was even released! Obviously it doesn't help the industry at all, but there's really nothing we can do except hope more companies spend more time exploiting their systems' capabilities to the fullest. It's the quality of the games themselves that counts, not the quantity (some companies think otherwise; we'll see where they are in two years). You've got to respect Nintendo for at least that much; they run their systems into the ground, and if you look at the aging SNES, it's still cranking out

incredible games years after its original release (Street Fighter Alpha 2 is a prime example). Oh, and for what it's worth—many of us still play our NESes regularly, so don't assume that just because there are no new games being made that a system is obsolete. The classics will live forever.

Your mag is sincerely the best. I've become a regular buyer only recently, but I have found your magazine to be of a much higher standard than the others. There are numerous things I could mention in your favor, but the one major thing that really sets you aside from the others is that most of the other magazines (names omitted) clearly favor the Sony PlayStation. They have a definite bias for the system and tend to give its games better ratings. I own a Genesis and a Game Gear (and hopefully a Saturn soon) and I'm obviously a dedicated Sega follower. I also firmly believe the Saturn is superior to the PS not just because I am loyal to Sega, but because:

- A) The Saturn has more accessories than the PS,
- B) The Saturn is the first next-generation console to offer modem play and internet access and
- C) Sega is a company with much wider and longer experience in the video game industry than Sony.

Anyway, like I said, your mag is the best—A+ for you!

Mateusz Buczko
Address Not Given

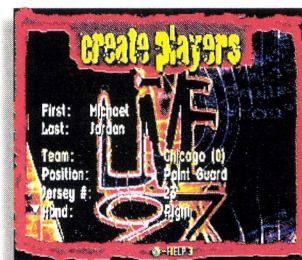
[Ed: Thanks for the kind words. It has always been IG's policy to refrain from any sort of system bias in any of our reviews or previews. While we agree that each system has its ups and downs, there are always going to be games on each system that are not going to be found on the other systems (Mario, Crash, VF, etc.) and in truth, the only winner in these "system wars" is the gamer who gets to have a taste of each system's crop of stellar exclusive titles. Staying loyal to one company is not uncommon, but it just means that you're not going to be able to play 100 percent of the great games out there, period.

I commend your magazine for being on the cutting edge of next-generation gaming. I have some gripes with the basketball games on the market, and was hoping you could answer a few questions.

- 1) Why haven't Michael Jordan and Charles Barkley appeared in any EA Sports basketball game since NBA Showdown for the SNES? And Shaquille O'Neal only appears on EA products; why is that?
- 2) Athletes like Deion Sanders, Wayne Gretzky, Frank Thomas and Ken Griffey Jr. all endorse their own games, but they still appear in games like Madden NFL 96, Triple Play 97 and NHL Powerplay '96. Is it because the companies that make these games have acquired the MLBPA, NFLPA and NHLPA licenses? And if so, how come EA and Sony Interactive Sports don't get the NBA Players Association license? Wouldn't this solve the problem of missing players in games like NBA Live, In The Zone and Shootout?
- 3) The NBA and the NBA Players Association have come to terms on the league being able to use the Players Union logo. Do you think this will change things? Thanks.

Dave Matthews
Address Not Given

[Ed: Whew. Let's try to sum it up this way: To get player licenses for sports games, game companies have to obtain the rights from various players associations. However, they only can use the players who have joined those unions, which for



A NBA players licenses are one annoying facet of creating sports games. The easiest solution, at least from EA's point of view, is to allow people to create a player.

the most part is generally about 95 percent of the players in any given sport. Some individual superstars often don't join these licensing entities because quite frankly they can make more money by licensing themselves individually. EA licensed Shaquille O'Neal for several games (many of which didn't come out), and thus they can also use his license for NBA Live. What's even more interesting is that EA also licensed Michael Jordan, but weren't allowed to use him in several games that they would have liked to because he had the final say in things and chose against it. EA also cannot use Charles Barkley because he had an exclusive agreement with Accolade (Shut up and Jam!). Some sports talents (Ken Griffey Jr. is a good example) may enter into a non-exclusive endorsement deal, allowing them to appear in multiple games simultaneously. After all, most athletes love playing with their electronic alter egos on the video game screen anyway. As for things changing any time soon, I would sincerely doubt it. In the end, big-name talents are unlikely to join a specific union when more money is to be had by individual licenses.



Send your comments, concepts and theories to: **IG Communications**

by e-mail at
igdean@aol.com
subject line: Communications

or by mail at
1920 Highland Avenue
Suite 222, Lombard, IL 60148

FEATURE REVIEW

Madden NFL '97

After a four year off, Madden and his boys are back in town

For the first time in four years, EA's Madden NFL series returns to the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn.

McKnight on Madden

Madden NFL '97 is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn.

Madden NFL '97 for Saturn

If you're a fan of the Madden NFL series, you'll be happy to see that EA has returned to the Saturn with Madden NFL '97. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn. The game is a sequel to Madden NFL '93, which was the last game in the series to be released on the Saturn.

Next and beyond: This title looks like a Madden game-winner. Don't always, a good start.

Team Player

RECOMMENDED

A IG always strives to maintain a balance of coverage for each platform. This is a hard thing, since PlayStation releases seem to outnumber the Saturn by a 2:1 ratio, not to mention the recent Nintendo 64 explosion. PC games, however, do help compound the problem. Madden is a good example, showing how we try to give each version of a game ample coverage in the mag.

A + M + O + K



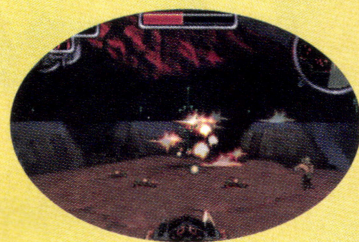
IT'S PART TANK,
PART SUBMARINE.
AND ULTIMATELY,
ONE FUNKY
LOOKING COFFIN.

PC CD-ROM

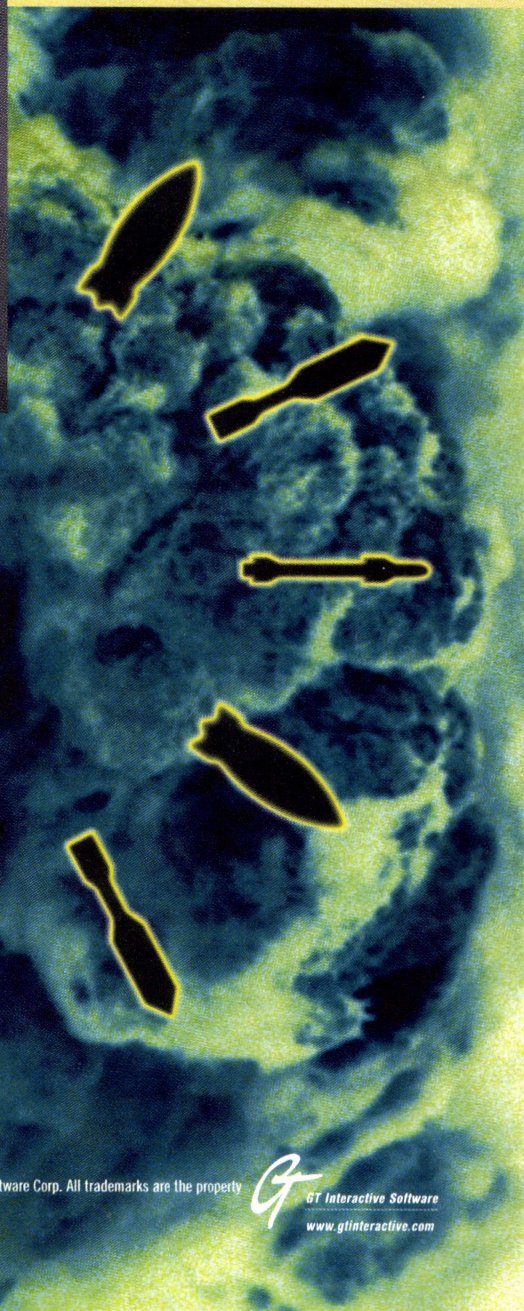
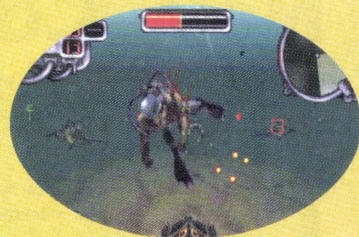


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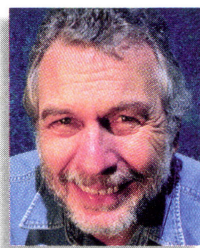
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"We will be the leader in connecting the out-of-the-home Internet market, and you ain't seen nothing yet."

—Nolan Bushnell
Aristo International

New Coin-Ops Bring Internet Sports to Arcades

On Aug. 22, Aristo International, a coin-operated entertainment company, unveiled a new line of arcade machines which are a hybrid of video games, jukeboxes and communications centers. By combining Internet and network technology with arcade games, these machines offer networked gameplay.

The new Aristo line includes "TeamNet," cybersports machines that allow teams of four players to compete in tournaments, and "TouchNet," a series of coin- and credit card-operated console stations with touch-sensitive screens that give players access to news and sports, games, chat rooms, trivia challenges and personal e-mail.

"We will be the leader in connecting the out-of-the-home Internet market, and you ain't seen nothing yet," says Aristo Director of strategic planning Nolan Bushnell. "There's something comfortable and exciting about competing in teams of four. We'll hold sports tournaments, give prizes and post the names of winning teams."

Bushnell, who started the video game revolution as the founder of Atari and the



▲ Another new unit recently introduced is MusicNet, which could very well be the future of jukebox machines, with touch-sensitive choice selection and a sleek-looking interface.



▲ The sleek-looking TouchNet unit is more versatile than the TeamNet unit, but offers less (left). A bunch of very giddy folks have a grand-old time while playing multiplayer arcade games on the TeamNet machine (above).

creator of Pong, says, "TeamNet is the next step in arcade sports. We don't want league licenses for TeamNet; we'll have our own leagues. We'll create our own stars."

TeamNet units are about the size of a small billiard table with four player stations built in an arc around a large monitor. Players control their athletes with four buttons and a roller ball. Bushnell says the system is made for games played from the traditional third-person perspective. According to Bushnell, there will be no first-person games on TeamNet since the system involves four players sharing a fairly large screen.

The tournament concept is integral to having the units physically present in the same location or in separate locations competing through an Internet connection.

TouchNet, Aristo's more versatile coin-operated stations, will offer less game-oriented choices. While TouchNet will have access to a few games, including a new solitaire designed by Bushnell, it will also offer recorded-voice chat rooms and news updates. Bushnell feels that TouchNet will succeed in bars and restaurants as well as video game arcades. The first four games for TeamNet will be hockey, air hockey, soccer and football simulations—games that Bushnell feels are well-suited for sports bars.

Aristo plans to test TeamNet and TouchNet in several local markets through September and will launch the system nationally later this year.

Retailers Expect Big Results from N⁶⁴

Toys 'R' Us and The Electronics Boutique, two of the nation's largest video game retailers, are bracing for enormous sales this coming holiday season from Nintendo's long-awaited 64-Bit super system, the Nintendo 64.

"You can go into any of our stores and test-drive the N64," says Toys 'R' Us Vice President and Divisional Merchandising Manager John Sullivan. "We have three N64 units in every one of our stores in the U.S. That's been in place since the first week in September."

Sullivan is so confident in the N64, he wishes Toys 'R' Us could have more of the initial shipment. "Nintendo said they would get 500,000 or 600,000. We would take them all."

Executives at The Electronics Boutique are equally enthusiastic. "We have a history of doing reserved lists, presale, ramping of new releases...New releases are a big part of our business," says Pete Roithmayr, Electronics Boutique's director/senior buyer of video games. "I can quite easily say that this is the largest presale we will ever have done. We just started today (Sept. 13), but we do plan on preselling every piece we get."

According to Roithmayr, Electronics Boutique plans to tap into existing excitement for the N64 through in-store advertising. "First of all, word of mouth had [excitement over the N64] going for months. The enthusiast and gamer maga-

zines have been talking about N64 for a while. Starting September 1, we put up an array of P.O.P.s (point of purchase advertising) in our stores with the theme 'The N is near! Are you prepared for September 13th?'"

"We did a little twist on the fact that on Friday the 13th you could come into our stores and for \$64 you could put a deposit down that would guarantee you a Nintendo 64 on the release date."

Both Sullivan and Roithmayr express confidence in the Nintendo 64 as an ongoing gaming platform. When asked if the price of cartridges will scare customers, Sullivan says that the games he's seen are worth the price. "I haven't had the pricing confirmed on some of the third-party stuff. Certainly at \$60 or \$65 there's enough interest in a great great game like Mario 64 to carry that price."

Roithmayr agrees. "I don't know that the retail price of software is as big a concern as the quality of the game. Customers are willing to pay for quality."

"It all comes down to the software. Provided the software is there, N64 should do well. Tradition shows you that when a new platform comes out and provided the software is up to speed, for lack of a better word, the system will sell very well for a long period of time."

Sony tops 2 Million Sales of PlayStation in the U.S.

A Sept. 5 press release from Sony Computer Entertainment of America (SCEA) announced the news that Sony has shipped more than 2 million PlayStation consoles and more than 9 million pieces of software in the United States.

A large part of Sony's success should be attributed to overwhelming support from the third-party community. Williams gave Sony a six-month exclusive on the 32-Bit version of Mortal Kombat 3 as did Takara with Battle Arena Toshinden. Resident Evil, the Capcom haunted hit that is the all-time best-selling PlayStation title, is still only available for the PlayStation.



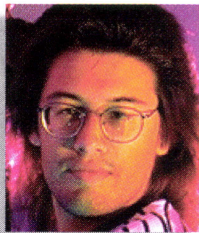
The Nintendo 64 has been preselling like hot cakes in gaming retail outlets across the United States, from small specialty shops to the big boys, like Toys 'R' Us and Electronics Boutique.

NeoStar Retail Group to Reorganize Under Chapter 11

NeoStar Retail Group, Inc., the parent company of major computer and video game retailers Babbage's and Software Etc., announced that it had filed a voluntary petition to reorganize under Chapter 11 of the U.S. Bankruptcy Code in Federal Bankruptcy Court in Dallas. The company, along with its subsidiaries, elected to seek court protection in order to strengthen vendor confidence to ensure adequate inventory for the upcoming holiday sales season. The stores are continuing to operate under normal conditions, although quite surprisingly, some of the local Babbage's stores reported that they suddenly are no longer being given permission to take preorders on Nintendo 64 systems (as of press time, of course). The company promises that its financial future is stable and that the reorganization will help the company grow even more. Of course, NeoStar's competitors are stating otherwise, but that's to be expected.



John Romero leaves id



One of the founding members of id Software, creators of the megahits *Wolfenstein 3-D*, *Doom*, *Hexen* and most recently *Quake*, John Romero is now moving on to do new things.

John Romero, one of the founding members of id Software, helped shape the company's image. He first became famous for his behind-the-scenes work on such breakthrough games as *Doom*, *Hexen* and *Quake*; but as id's fame spread, Romero became equally well known for driving Ferraris and speaking his mind to the press.

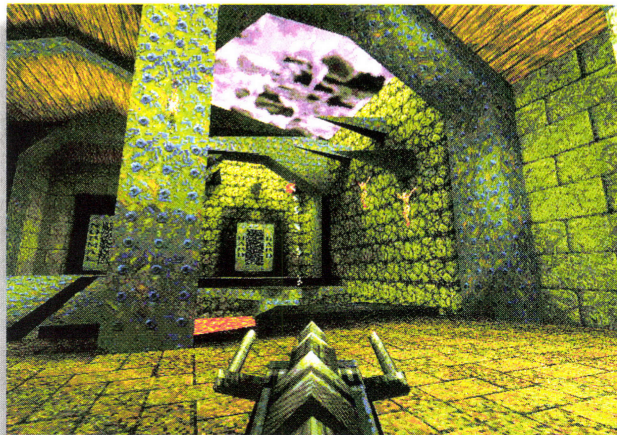
Critics jokingly dubbed Romero the ego of id and friends say he's a genius, but everybody agrees that he is one of the great game gods of the '90s. As the level designer of *Doom*, Romero gave the game its identity.

In a move that caught the gaming world off guard, Romero has announced that he's leaving id to create his own company tentatively named Dream Design. According to Mike Wilson of id, Romero intends to bring in two or three partners, including Tom Hall, also one of the founders of id.

They intend to hire 40 some-odd people and design three games at once, says Wilson. All of the games will use Quake technology licensed from id, but only one of the games will be a 3-D shooter. The other two haven't been fleshed out yet to our knowledge, but they will be very different.

According to Wilson, Romero left id on very friendly terms. "We wish the best for John, and he for us. What John will be doing is exploring some of the alternative game designs and ideas that we never had the time or manpower to implement. We are as eager to see what he comes up with as he is."

Despite tremendous success, id executives decided that they wanted id to become a large



John Romero, formerly of id Software, played a key role in the development of the Internet's latest gaming sensation, the awesome *Quake*, as well as the one that started it all, *DOOM*.

company. Though *Doom* is arguably the most popular computer game of all time, id never expanded beyond its 10-man development team.

Wilson says that Romero's departure will have little effect on id's main goals. "We will continue to do our thing here, which is massive R & D for next-generation 3-D technology to bring out and knock the world's socks off again and again. And then we'll release the world's most intense action game to lay on top of that tech. We don't need John to do that."

Not surprisingly, Romero has decided to continue using id technology for his games as well. "John just completed a tour, checking out all competing

3-D engines that are being worked on and offered up for license to compete with the Quake engine," says Wilson. "He concluded that all our would-be competitors are well behind us, and that he wishes to license the Quake tech for all three titles."

Using the Quake engine will allow Romero to focus more on his strength—game design, rather than dabble in programming. Part of what made id so successful in the past was the combination of the technological programming of John Carmack and Romero's creativity. By incorporating the Quake engine into his new company's software, Romero will be able to continue relying on Carmack's wizardry to bring his magic to life.

DigiPen To Offer Degree in Interactive Visual Simulation Technology

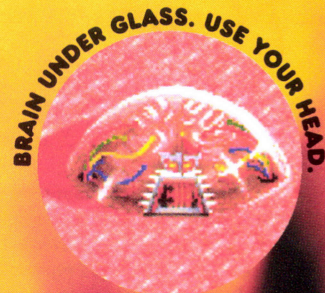
The DigiPen Institute of Technology recently announced that they will be offering the world's first-ever Baccalaureate Degree of Science in Real Time Interactive Simulation. The new non-profit, higher-education institution is the first one ever that is dedicated exclusively to video game development, and is opening in Seattle, Wash., in September of 1997. The four-year program is slated to focus on video game and computer animation programming with an emphasis on realtime interactive simulations. Nintendo of America, who also supports the DigiPen Applied Computer Graphics school in Vancouver, Canada (which was the first North American school ever to offer video game development classes), is actively supporting the new institute by providing hardware and software development tools.

Applications will be accepted immediately for the inaugural class of 2001. DigiPen expects to draw more than 10,000 applicants from around the globe, and selection of students will take place during or before June 1997. The classes offered will include several levels of math, physics, courses in computer environments and operating systems, computer languages and graphics, image processing, data structure and algorithms, animation and creative aspects of video games courses. Tuition will be approximately \$300 per credit, or about \$11,000 a year, according to DigiPen. For more information about the school, check out DigiPen's Web site at <http://www.digipen.com/>, or send an e-mail to jchu@digipen.com.

Acclaim Cuts 20 Percent of Work Force

Glenn Cove, NY-based Acclaim Entertainment announced that they have laid off nearly 20 percent of their 342 full-time employees, accounting for nearly 70 workers. Acclaim, who has repeatedly been losing large amounts of money each fiscal quarter, attributed the layoffs to being part of a cost-management initiative that's being put in place to help regain consistent profitability through more efficient cost control.





BLOW UP COWS, EAT GOLDFISH, THEN GO TO HELL.

This is the bizarre world of Baldies. A world that you build and where lunacy reigns. The idea? Destroy the nasty little hairy guys before they destroy you—the Baldies. 15 devilishly clever weapons, 100 intense levels, hidden and bonus rounds, hot action graphics in five weird worlds (hell included). And it's the only multi-player, extended-play game with a chrome dome crew. Warning: May cause permanent hair loss.

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Both DOS and
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IG Shorts ■ Sony to drop PlayStation to \$149?

Just before press time we received several supposedly "confirmed" reports that Sony Computer Entertainment of America would indeed be once again dropping the price of the PlayStation, this time down to the dirt-cheap price of \$149.99. While we could not get direct confirmation from Sony before the issue closed, the idea of a \$149 PlayStation isn't at all out of the range of reality, as it would put Sony in an enviable position to compete with Nintendo.

■ Philips Media acquires

Robotech: Crystal Dreams from Gametek: Philips Media announced that they have acquired the rights to publish and distribute the upcoming Nintendo 64 title, *Robotech: Crystal Dream*, from Gametek Inc. The game, which features fully textured 3-D models and gameplay inspired from the popular cartoon, was supposedly not coming along as well as planned, but Gametek wasn't available for comment at press time.

■ id Prepares to Launch

QuakeWorld: id Software threw a party on Sept. 20 to celebrate the launch of *QuakeWorld*. This new service, which comes in the form of a patch, links Quake servers together in order to create a centralized database of Quake players and clans, in addition to statistics such as their kills. The patch will also optimize multiplayer play and offer a better chat interface.

■ **Nintendo of America to distribute 16-Bit Disney Titles:** Nintendo of America announced that they have acquired the U.S. distribution rights to two Super Nintendo Disney titles, *Maui Mallard* and *Pinocchio*. Both titles are being published in Japan by Capcom, and are due out in the United States this November.

■ Konami of America Changes

Name: Konami of America has announced that effective Sept. 20, the company will no longer go by the name of Konami America, Inc. The new name is, well, Konami of America. (duh!) ■ **SubSpace Hits The Internet:** Virgin's *SubSpace*, a newcomer to the Internet, has unexpectedly gained prominence as one of the most-played games on the Net. The game is essentially a large multiplayer version of *Asteroids*, allowing players from all over the world to square off against each other individually or via teams. Currently, the game is undergoing beta-testing and can be downloaded for free through numerous FTP sites on the Internet.

HOT 15

Top 15 Arcade Games



1. **Tekken 2**
Namco
2. **Metal Slug**
SNK
3. **Soul Edge Ver. 2**
Namco
4. **Golden Tee 3D Golf**
Incredible Technologies
5. **Run & Gun 2**
Konami
6. **Dungeons & Dragons '96**
Capcom
7. **Soul Edge**
Namco
8. **Marvel Super Heroes**
Capcom
9. **Strikers 1945**
Worldwide Video
10. **Viper**
Fabtek
11. **Street Fighter Alpha 2**
Capcom
12. **Ultimate MK3**
Midway
13. **Bust-A-Move-Again**
Taito
14. **Raiden DX**
Fabtek
15. **Bust-A-Move**
Taito/Neo-Geo

Top 15 Games From Japan



1. **Smash Court**
Namco/PlayStation
2. **Fighting Vipers**
Sega/Saturn
3. **Street Fighter Zero 2**
Capcom/PlayStation
4. **Pocket Monster**
Nintendo/Game Boy
5. **Cool Boarders**
Wep Systems/PlayStation
6. **World Stadium EX**
Namco/PlayStation
7. **Tenchio Kurau 2**
Capcom/Saturn
8. **Arc the Lad**
Sony CE/PlayStation
9. **Tobal No. 1**
Square/PlayStation
10. **Samurai Spirits 3**
SNK/PlayStation
11. **Bio Hazard**
Capcom/PlayStation
12. **Dark Savior**
Nintendo/Nintendo 64
13. **Super Mario 64**
Nintendo/Nintendo 64
14. **None too Wonderful**
Banpresto/PlayStation
15. **Popolocrois**
Sony CE/PlayStation



Current Release Top 15

1. **Madden NFL 97**
EA/Saturn/PS
2. **Tetris Attack**
Nintendo/SNES
3. **Tekken 2**
Namco/PlayStation
4. **Crash Bandicoot**
Sony CEA/PlayStation
5. **Die Hard Trilogy**
Fox/Saturn/PS
6. **Virtua Fighter Kids**
Sega/Saturn
7. **Andretti Racing**
EA Sports/PlayStation
8. **Bubble Bobble**
Acclaim/Saturn/PS
9. **Beyond the Beyond**
Sony CEA/PlayStation
10. **NCAA Gamebreaker**
Sony CEA/PlayStation
11. **Decathlete**
Sony CEA/Saturn
12. **Iron Storm**
Working Designs/Saturn
13. **Super Mario RPG**
Nintendo/SNES
14. **The Legend of Oasis**
Sega/Saturn
15. **Jumping Flash! 2**
Sony CEA/PlayStation

IG's Editors' Personal Top 15



1. **Wave Race 64**
Nintendo/Nintendo 64
2. **Saturn Bomberman**
Hudson/Saturn
3. **Super Mario 64**
Nintendo/Nintendo 64
4. **SubSpace**
Virgin/PC (Internet)
5. **Wipeout XL**
Sony Psygnosis/PlayStation
6. **Andretti Racing**
EA Sports/PlayStation
7. **Madden NFL 97**
EA Sports/Saturn/PS
8. **NHL Face Off 97**
Sony CEA/PlayStation
9. **Street Fighter Alpha 2**
Capcom/Saturn/PS
10. **Bubble Bobble**
Acclaim/Saturn/PS
11. **Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey**
Williams/Nintendo 64
12. **NBA Live 97**
EA Sports/PlayStation
13. **Quake**
id Software/PC
14. **Formula 1**
Psygnosis/PlayStation
15. **Dragon Force**
Working Designs/Saturn

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New WipeOut XL.



IG's Akira Kishimoto reports on the awesome first annual TOKYO GAMESHOW

IG was on hand to check out the very first Tokyo Game Show, held in Ariake, Tokyo from Aug. 22 to 24. The show was sponsored by CESA, the Computer Entertainment Software Association, a group devoted to promoting the growth of video games in the entertainment field. Some of the distinguished members of this group include the presidents of Konami, Enix, Square, Capcom and Namco, to name a few. In fact, most of the major software developers in Japan are members of the group, with the only notable exceptions being the major companies who have their own hardware platforms (namely Nintendo, Sega and Sony). Formerly, the main trade show in Japan for consumer interests was the semi-annual Consumer Software Group (CSG) show, but like CES, its popularity waned and now a new force in trade shows has emerged (just like E³ did here in the United States).

The show was held at a place called Tokyo Big Sight, which is a new convention complex near the heart of Tokyo, near Sega's Joypolis amusement complex. Over 100,000 people were in attendance, with huge crowds lined up outside the entrance before the show opened on the first day. Just getting tickets, which sold for roughly \$10, meant waiting in line for nearly an hour, and there were scalpers selling tickets on the street for about double to triple the normal rate. Seeing how bad the situation was outside, you can probably imagine just how hectic it was inside the convention center.

Even with all the madness, you didn't find anyone complaining, with 87 hardware and software companies on the floor showcasing over 350 titles for the Saturn, PlayStation, Nintendo 64, and Windows and Mac platforms. Of all the platforms there, the one with the most games was the PlayStation, with over 160 games. Admittedly, the amount of Nintendo 64 software there was limited (in total, between Nintendo 64 and Super Famicom, there were less than 30 games), but the games that companies did show were looking quite impressive.

NINTENDO 64

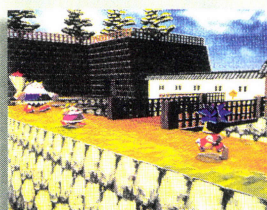
The absence of Nintendo at the show certainly left an impact on many people. Sega and Sony Computer Entertainment, while not part of the CESA group, did at least have their own booth showing off upcoming titles. A strong Nintendo presence at the show might have gone a long way in reassuring gamers that Nintendo is still strong and is going to

continue releasing the market-leading software that Japanese (and U.S., for that matter) gamers have come to expect from them. While those in the industry do realize that Nintendo is simply holding off until their own show, the annual Shoshinkai exhibition held in November, the average game player may not. Likewise, it might not have been so bad if there were more third-party games on display, but even those were limited, as there were only about 14 or 15 N64 games at the show.

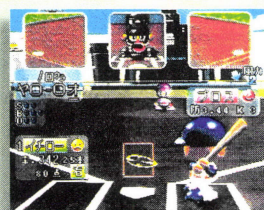


KONAMI SHOWS OFF N64 GAMES

Konami had five never-before-seen Nintendo 64 games to wow the crowds with: Ganbare Goemon 5 (Legend of the Mystical Ninja in the U.S.), Jikyu Powerful Pro Baseball 4 (Baseball with super-deformed players), Jikyu J-League Perfect Striker (Sequel to Fighting 11, one of the best soccer games ever made), Jikyu Golf Tournament '97 (Golf... yawn) and Mahjong Master (zzz...). The three games shown here were the most impressive. U.S. release anyone?



▲ Goemon 5 is the latest in the Mystical Ninja game series.



▲ Powerful Pro 4 continues the Japanese trend of SD players.



▲ Konami's Soccer is easily their most anticipated game in Japan.

FINAL FANTASY VII TOPS SQUARE'S STELLAR LINEUP



In addition to the Konami games that were shown for the Nintendo 64 (see bottom of page 30), there were a few other notable third parties showcasing their games in development. Enix, creators of the insanely popular Dragon Quest series, was displaying their first N64 title, *Wonder Project 2* (above right), a game in which you bring a little girl robot to life and teach her the ins and outs of everyday living. The graphics are done in 2-D, with amazingly fluid animation and cute effects. The girl, Josette, will even run up and tap on the screen to ask you questions sometimes.

Seta was showing off their latest three N64 games, *St. Andrews Links* (a nice-looking 3-D rendered polygon golf game), *Wild Choppers* (Black Dawn-style helicopter action game), and the great-looking racing title, *Rev Limit* (above). All three look much better than their first N64 game, *Shogi*.

As for the remaining titles, Imagineer showed *King of Pro Baseball*, a nice-looking baseball title with the traditional little stubby players that Japanese gamers adore. The game isn't slated for a U.S. release anytime soon, but if it does reach these shores, the players will most definitely be given a makeover. Kemco had *Blade and Barrel*, a futuristic take on the classic Atari game, *Combat*, and Epoch showed off *Doraemon 64*, a game that in many ways looked similar to *Mario 64*, but with the characters from the popular children's manga in Japan. Otherwise, there wasn't much going on in the Nintendo camp, as most companies are waiting for Shoshinkai this November.

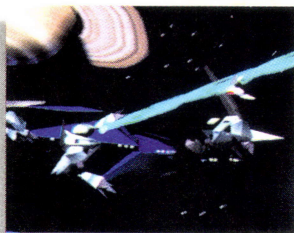


SONY PLAYSTATION

Sony Computer Entertainment had a decent showing, with a few good games but nothing overly spectacular. The most promising title there was *Arc the Lad II* (above), sequel to the hit RPG from last summer, which sports improved graphics and a quest three times as large as its predecessor. Another Sony RPG with simply incredible graphics was *Wild Arms*, due out before the holidays in Japan. More of a traditional RPG, *Wild Arms* has astounding 3-D battle scenes somewhat similar to those found in the *Final Fantasy VII* demo, but with better graphics.

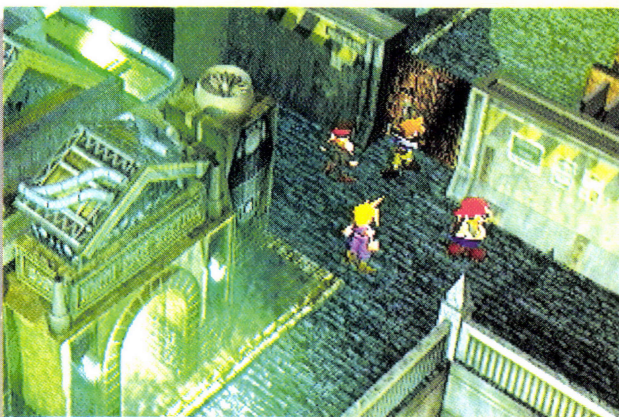
Also shown from Sony CE was *Princess Maker: The Dreaming Fairy*, another one of those chick sims that only seem to hit Japan, as well as *PaRappa the Rapper*, a strangely unique game where you, as PaRappa, go on a trip to train yourself in various aspects in order to impress a girl. There are several kinds of sequences, like driving and fight training, all played to music that you need to flow with (by treating the controller like an instrument) to master the sequence. Sony also stressed their foreign ("Yoge") sports games, like *MLB Pennant Race* and *NFL GameDay*.

Sony's third-party situation



▲ Square's *Bushido Blade* lets you fight using swords and rather than life decreasing when you get hit, you can actually take someone out with one shot if the hit is strong enough (top). *FF Tactics* is much like *Quest's Tactics Ogre* but with FF Characters (middle). Not much is known about *ZAVER*, except that it's a 3-D shooter (above).

▼ *Final Fantasy VII* is quite possibly the most eagerly anticipated PlayStation title ever, and rumor has it that the game is being delayed until January 1997 to upgrade the size to three CDs.



Square was on-hand with five major titles (not including *Tobal No. 1*, which was already released in Japan) for the PlayStation system. Obviously their most anticipated title is the amazing *Final Fantasy VII*, of which a playable demo was given out to showgoers (a variation of the demo disc that came packed with *Tobal No. 1*), that also included the entire uncompressed video of the *Final Fantasy VI* (FF3 in the U.S.) Interactive CG Game that was showed at last year's SIG-GRAPH show. There once was a time when many gamers thought that that CG was a teaser for an upcoming Nintendo 64 *Final Fantasy*...

The other games at Square's booth (not playable) were *Bushido Blade*, a 3-D fighting game in the vein of *Tekken 2* that looked very early, *SaGa Frontier*, the latest entry in the immensely popular *Romancing SaGa* RPG series, *Final Fantasy Tactics*, a new Sim-RPG that uses *Final Fantasy* character classes and is very similar to *Quest's Tactics Ogre*, and *ZAVER*, a new shooting game.

Obviously a good selection of titles, as Square, formerly a company known for their RPGs, is branching out into new genres. Many Square fans are probably concerned about Square creating games in genres that they've never worked with before, but if *Tobal No. 1* is any indication (over 800,000 units sold), the company is staying put on the road to success.



was pretty nice. Namco was on hand to unveil Soul Edge to the public for the first time. The PS version is an arcade-perfect port of the weapon-wielding fighting game, based on the newer Soul Edge Ver. 2. Namco also had Rage Racer, the new spin-off of the popular Ridge Racer series with all-new tracks and cars, and Namco Museum Volume 4, with more of Namco's arcade classics, including Pac-Land, Return of Ishtar and Assault.

Konami had an impressive PS lineup as well, with Vandal Hearts (a graphically impressive 3-D Simulation-RPG), NBA Power Dunkers 2 (In The Zone 2), Winning Eleven '97 (an

To re-create the feel of the arcade Virtual On, Sega has created a special dual-analog stick controller for use on the Saturn.

awesome-looking new soccer game), Sexy Parodius (2-D shooting with scantily clad women) and perhaps the biggest announcement of the show, a new sequel to the fabulous Metal Gear series from the NES, Metal Gear Solid.

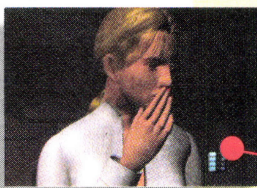
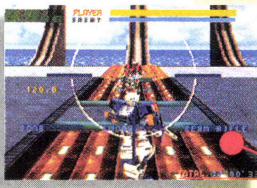
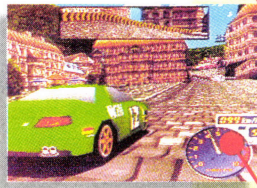
Capcom brought a solid lineup to TGS, with Breath of Fire III, Super Puzzle Fighter II X and Rockman (Mega Man) 8, and they showed, for the first time ever, pictures of Bio Hazard 2 (above) and actual video of Street Fighter III for the arcade (FINALLY!).

Other games of note include Takara's cutesy Battle Arena Nitohshinden, which is basically Toshinden with child-versions of the game's characters, and Tonkin House's V-Tennis 2.



SEGA SATURN

The Sega booth was crowded with tons of people trying to get a chance to play Virtual On for the Saturn. To re-create the feel of the arcade game, Sega has manufactured a special dual-analog stick controller for home use (above). The game itself, while not arcade-perfect graphically, has all the components that made it so popular in arcades. Sega's other big game was Shining the Holy Ark, a new

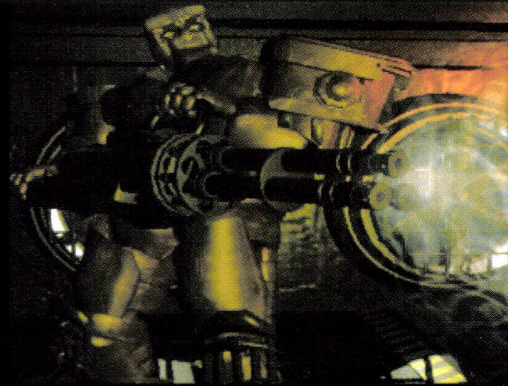
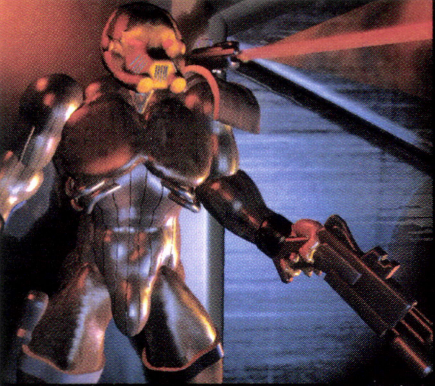


THE TOP GAMES OF TGS '96

Nintendo 64:
Ganbare Goemon 5 (Konami)
Jikyū J-League Perfect Striker (Konami)
Rev Limit (Seta)
Wonder Project J 2 (Enix)

Sony PlayStation:
Metal Gear Solid (Konami)
Arc the Lad II (Sony CE)
Rage Racer (Namco)
Soul Edge (Namco)
Bio Hazard 2 (Capcom)
Final Fantasy VII (Square)
Saga Frontier (Square)

Sega Saturn:
Shining the Holy Ark (Sega)
Virtual On (Sega)
Daytona USA: CC Edition (Sega)
Grandia (Game Arts)
Enemy Zero (Warp)
Assault Suit Leynos 2 (Masaya)



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THINK YOU'VE GOT A
HOMING DEVICE
SHOVED
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ASS.



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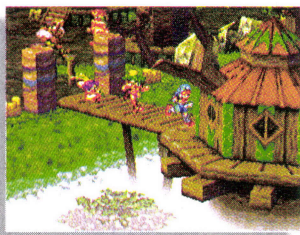


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JAMMA

AMUSEMENT MACHINE SHOW '96

Sega, Namco, Capcom and Konami come up big at this year's JAMMA arcade show in Japan



four-CD interactive movie, Enemy Zero (which looks great), and Riverhill had a near-complete Saturn version of the classic Ogre Battle.

Game Arts had two of the best-looking titles at the show, including Lunar: Silver Star Story, the gorgeous remake of the Sega CD classic, and Grandia (below), a fantastic new RPG that many are calling "the Final Fantasy VII of the Saturn."

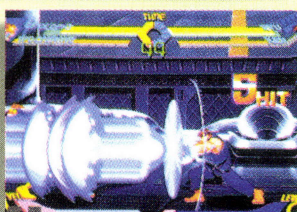
Other games on hand were SNK's Real Bout: Fatal Fury (also for PlayStation), World Heroes Perfect, and Samurai Spirits RPG, Takara's Toshinden URA and Masaya's Assault Suit Leynos 2, sequel to the Genesis hit game, Target Earth.

ig

Two of Sega's biggest arcade titles were Sega Touring Car Championship, a new racing game, and the long-awaited Model 3 fighting game, Virtua Fighter 3.



Capcom's new Street Fighter EX (SF with polygonal characters—below), and X-Men Vs. Street Fighter (a mix of the X-Men and SFA arcade games—middle).



The 34th JAMMA Amusement Machine Show was recently held at Makuhari Messe, in Chiba, Japan. Lately the trend has been to create arcade games that are one of two categories: either A) easy to do a quick-portover to home systems, or B) totally impossible to port home. Undoubtedly, most games will be easily portable to home systems, with the exception of extremely powerful games like Virtua Fighter 3, and the games that fit into category B; the huge interactive arcade units that require some use of physical behavior to control, such as Namco's Alpine Racer or Aqua Jet games.

Since we're tight on space, let's get right to the games that were at the show. Sega had three major games on display: Virtua Fighter 3, Touring Car Championship and Wave Runner. VF 3, running on the new Model 3 hardware, is absolutely stunning, with amazing graphics and the tried-and-true VF gameplay that fighting fans have come to adore. The game is finally done and should be in Japanese arcades by the time you read this. Touring Car Championship is Sega's latest racer, but what makes the game really shine is the way the game allows for late entries into the race. Since the game is linkable for up to eight players, it allows newcomers to join the race while the first player to start the game is still doing their qualifying lap. In this way, more people can join in without having to wait out entire races before getting a chance to play. Truly a great idea by Sega.

Wave Runner is a bland JetSki racing game that feels more like a motorcycle racer. Much more realistic was Namco's Aqua Jet, in which you stand on an actual JetSki and lean your body back and forth to control it. Also at the show from Namco was Alpine Racer 2, the sequel to last year's great skiing simulator. Both Aqua Jet and Alpine Racer 2 run on

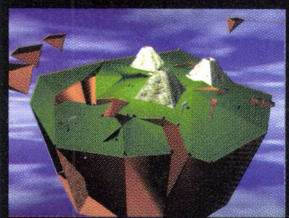
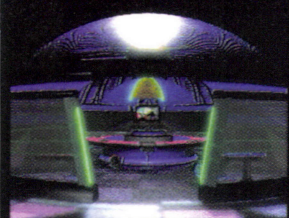
Namco's System Super 22 hardware, which is capable of some great effects.

Coming back to more traditional-style arcade games was Capcom, who, while sticking to their tried-and-true format of 2-D fighting, haven't been left behind in the technology department. Their new arcade board, CPS 3, features a CD-ROM drive for the initial memory storage, and then a very large RAM buffer so that there will be no slowdown or load delays, while delivering top-quality games at a cheaper cost thanks to the prices of CD. The first game for this new system is Red Earth, or Warzard in Japan. Following that will be (finally) the long-awaited Street Fighter III (and yes, thank God, it's 2-D), although only a short video clip was viewable at the show. In the meantime, Street Fighter enthusiasts can get their fixes with X-Men Vs. Street Fighter, a tag team-style fighter in the X-Men: COTA vein, with nine players from SFA and nine from the first X-Men, or Street Fighter EX, a Tekken-like 2.5-D polygonal Street Fighter game that utilizes 3-D characters on a 2-D playfield.

Konami had the most impressive-looking shooter on display with Solar Assault, a fully 3-D version of Gradius that will hopefully make it to the states. Additionally, they showcased their new racing game called GT-Club, which looks as if it takes place in southern Europe with compact cars for racers. The graphic detail is amazing, and interaction with the scenery is common. There was also much talk about a new "Model 3 killer" fighting game called Cobra, that supposedly pushes upward of 5 million polygons per second. It's expected to be featured at the upcoming AMOA show in Dallas.

Other games worth mentioning? SNK showed off Samurai Shodown 4 and Super Tag Battle, while Taito announced a new Darius game, and displayed a new 3-D polygon fighting game called Fighter's Impact that looked average at best.

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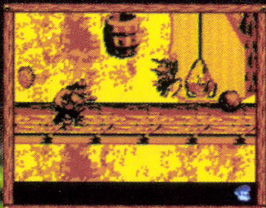
New Game Boy
pocket.
Smaller than
a banana.



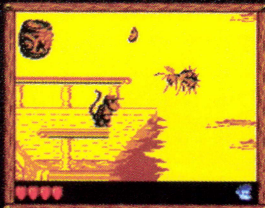
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Game screens shown from Super Game Boy.

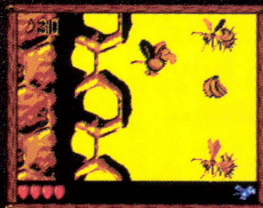
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**PlanetWeb and the
Sega Saturn NetLink:**

Aiming to Bring the World to the

by Brian Osserman

As major industry buzz words go, there are few more overhyped than the World Wide Web. There are already literally millions of people with access to the Web, and with the mass media attention it has received recently, just about everyone else has heard of it and would like to see what all the fuss is about. The major problem is that a low-end computer capable of accessing the Web runs about \$1,000. Even if a household can afford the first computer, the chances are good that it will be reserved for word-processing and other productivity applications, and even if the parents decide to get Web access, they may well be reluctant to give their kids the run of their expensive new computer. This is where Sega and PlanetWeb come in with their Saturn modem and Web browser. Saturn owners can buy the NetLink package for \$199.99, and for the cost of a PPP account (any PPP account will work—the provider which will be advertised with the bundle is Concentric Network Corporation, who provides unlimited PPP access for \$20/month) will be able to browse the Web—and, if their service provider has e-mail access, (Concentric does) send and receive e-mail—on their TV set.

From a marketing perspective, the idea is extremely attractive. NetLink provides a cheap way for families to get Web access without having to buy a computer or run the risk of their kids deleting their word processor to make room on the hard disk for the latest game. Even families without a Saturn would be able to get the entire setup



for \$400, and find themselves with a rather powerful games console thrown into the bargain. Reality has proven a bit more daunting to proponents of TV-based Web browsers, but PlanetWeb, the company which is writing the Internet software which will be packed in with Sega's Saturn modem, has met the challenge head-on. TVs have

a number of inherent display limitations, the most important of which is that a TV can only display up to about 640x480 resolution, and even that has to be interlaced. In contrast, a computer monitor can often display up to 1280x1024 without any interlacing. In addition, a TV has more limitations on what sort of image it produces well. The practical result is that it is very challenging to display easily legible text on a TV screen, and images also have a nasty tendency to come out poorly.

PlanetWeb has focused most of its attention on addressing these issues, and has done a pretty impressive job. In addition to the limitations imposed by the TV, they are also working with a 256-color palette, meaning they have to choose their colors carefully. Nonetheless, text antialiasing (the process of using grey pixels around the edges of letters to make them appear smoother) makes for text that remains very legible except with the smallest html font sizes, and images are also processed pretty heavily to make them appear as crisp as possible under the circumstances. PlanetWeb placed the emphasis on preserving flesh tones, with the result that faces tend to look quite good, while various other color ranges tend to suffer a bit. The result

**NetLink provides a
cheap way for families
to get Web access
without having to buy
a \$1,000 computer...**

NetLink can be used with any standard PPP Internet account, but the company sponsoring the modem is the Concentric Network, a well-known nationwide Internet access provider.



is that pictures of people appear noticeably better than they would with a standard 256-color browser, but the overall result is still not up to the level of quality provided by a browser running in 16 or 24 Bit color. Also, to make as good use of the 640x480 screen as possible, information and button bars at the top of the screen remain transparent. This means that the browser actually has significantly more room than a standard browser running at 640x480 would have. Sound is also fully implemented, taking advantage of the fact that the Saturn's internal sound capabilities means that users won't have to worry about getting a decent sound card. The first release of the browser will support most of the standard sound and graphics formats: jpegs, gifs (including animated ones) and xcms for graphics, and wavs, aiffs and aifs for sounds.

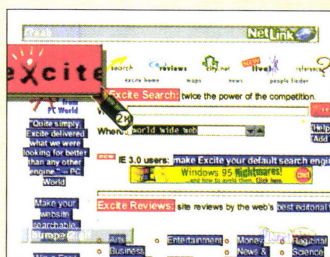
PlanetWeb has also put a certain amount



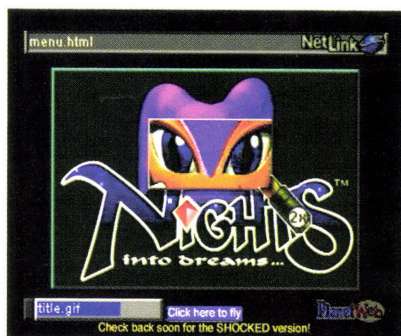
- With NetLink, Saturn owners will be able to surf the World Wide Web from their television sets.

of attention into making sure that the Saturn's practical restrictions don't keep the browser from being fun to use—the attitude is very much what one would expect from a group of game developers: The emphasis is very much on viewing the browser as an entertainment product, and on making sure that the interface doesn't get in the way. The two major interface restrictions they face are the fact that the standard Saturn control pad is digital, and the lack of a keyboard. They have addressed the first issue mainly by giving the user as many options as possible. In addition to the now-standard button bar across the top of the screen, PlanetWeb has included an eight-way directional menu which they call a "command compass" which pops up at the press of a button, allowing you to select any of the eight buttons with a single tap of the keypad, instead of having to hold the keypad down long enough to move the pointer up

- Virtually any Web site can be accessed using the PlanetWeb browser, although sites that require the ability to read certain new HTML tags and special browser plug-ins may not be accessible with the initial version of the software.



...the emphasis is very much on viewing the browser as an entertainment product, and on making sure that the interface doesn't get in the way.



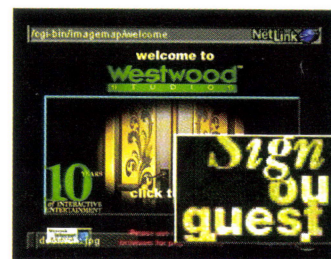
- Of particular interest to NetLink owners will be the variety of gaming sites, official and unofficial, that can be found on the WWW.

to the top of the screen. The latter option doesn't really take that long, but cutting off the extra second or so just makes it that much more convenient to use. The keyboard is definitely the stickier issue, as having some sort of keyboard-type input is absolutely necessary to be able to type in

URLs, fill out forms and write e-mail, and there is no really elegant way of doing this with only a standard Saturn controller. PlanetWeb has opted for a two-part solution. For users who don't plan to use e-mail, and therefore don't need to be able to input text very often, they have a point-and-click keyboard which pops up on the screen when needed. This is functional for very small amounts of text like a URL or a search-engine form, but would be unacceptably slow for writing out entire e-mails. To address this problem, Sega will be releasing a \$20 PS/2 keyboard adapter that will allow users to hook a standard PC keyboard up to their Saturn. Additionally, a complete package that consists of a Saturn system, the NetLink package, a custom Saturn keyboard, and Sega Rally will be available with an SRP of \$449.99.

PlanetWeb has included a variety of other features which keep the emphasis on the mass-market entertainment aspect of the browser. Aesthetically, there are a number of different graphics themes from which users may choose, and, unlike the major PC browsers, different sound effects accompany most actions. More importantly, PlanetWeb has included support for a parental lockout feature to prevent children from accessing pornographic or otherwise inappropriate material. This feature is activated when signing up for the PPP service, so that no one without a credit card can decide whether or not the lockout should be active.

NetLink, along with the PlanetWeb browser, will be released in North America on Oct. 31.



- The home page of Westwood Studios, who are bringing their popular strategy war game, Command & Conquer, to the Saturn late this year.

TWISTED METAL

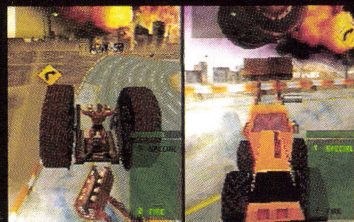
SWEET TOOTH AND THE BOYS REACH NEW MORAL LOWS IN THE MOST REPUGNANT DRIVING GAME EVER CREATED.



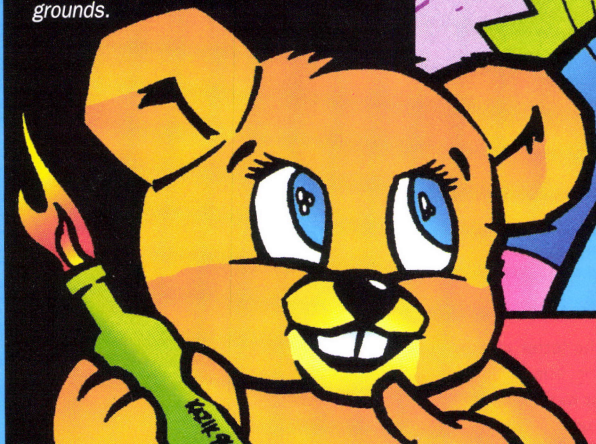
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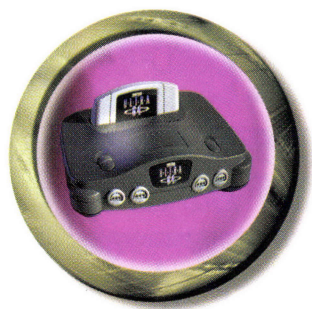


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UNSLAUGHTER!**



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RECENT RELEASES

PilotWings 64 [Nintendo]

Super Mario 64 [Nintendo]

NOVEMBER

Cruis'n USA [Nintendo]

Killer Instinct Gold [Nintendo]

Mortal Kombat Trilogy [Williams]

Turok: Dinosaur Hunter [Acclaim]

Wave Race 64 [Nintendo]

Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey [Williams]

DECEMBER

Blast Corps [Nintendo]

NBA Hang Time [Williams]

Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire [Nintendo]

Tetrisphere [Nintendo]

ANNOUNCED TITLES FOR 1997

Body Harvest [Nintendo]

Buggie Boogie [Nintendo]

Creator [Nintendo]

Dark Rift [Vic Tokai]

Doom 64 [Williams]

F-ZERO 64 [Nintendo]

FIFA Soccer 97 [Electronic Arts]

Freak Boy [Virgin]

GoldenEye 007 [Nintendo]

Ken Griffey Jr. 64 [Nintendo]

Kirby's Air Ride [Nintendo]

The Legend of Zelda 64 [Nintendo/64DD]

Mario Kart 64 [Nintendo]

Mission: Impossible [Ocean]

Robotech: Crystal Dreams [Philips]

Robotron X [Williams]

Silicon Valley [BMG Interactive]

StarFox 64 [Nintendo]

Super Mario RPG 2 [Nintendo/64DD]

Top Gear Rally [Kemco]

Top Gun: A New Adventure [Spectrum Holobyte]

Ultra Combat [GT Interactive]

Ultra Descent [Interplay]

War Gods [Williams]

Wet Corpse [Vic Tokai]

Yoshi's Island 64 [Nintendo]

This list is compiled from various sources including company releases and retail store guides. As such, all titles and dates are subject to change.

RECENT RELEASES

2 Xtreme [Sony CEA]

4X4 Gears & Guts [ASC]

Adidas Power Soccer [Psygnosis]

Andretti Racing [Electronic Arts]

Area 51 [Williams]

Bedlam [GT Interactive]

Beyond the Beyond [Sony CEA]

Black Dawn [Virgin]

Bubble Bobble [Acclaim]

Casper [Interplay]

Crash Bandicoot [Sony CEA]

Darknet [ASC]

Dark Forces [Lucas Arts]

Die Hard Trilogy [FOX Interactive]

Epidemic [Sony CEA]

Final DOOM [Williams]

Formula One [Sony CEA]

Impact Racing [JVC]

Jumping Flash! 2 [Sony CEA]

Killing Zone [Acclaim]

King of Fighters '95 [Sony CEA]

Madden NFL 97 [Electronic Arts]

Mortal Kombat Trilogy [Williams]

MVP Baseball [Data East]

NASCAR [Sierra On-Line]

NCAA Gamebreaker [Sony CEA]

NHL 97 [Electronic Arts]

NHL Powerplay Hockey [Virgin]

Perfect Weapon [ASC]

PGA Tour '97 [Electronic Arts]

Project: Horned Owl [Sony CEA]

Project Overkill [Konami]

Pro Pinball [Interplay]

Quarterback Club '97 [Acclaim]

Raw Pursuit [Impact Racing]

Rebel Assault 2 [Lucas Arts]

Ridge Racer Revolution [Namco]

Robo Pit [T+HQ]

Rocket Jockey [Rocket Science Games]

Samurai Shodown 3 [Sony CEA]

Spot Goes to Hollywood [Virgin]

Star Gladiator [Capcom]

Star Fighter [Acclaim]

Star Winder [Mindscape]

Steel Harbinger [Mindscape]

Strike Point [American Softworks]

Tecmo Super Bowl [Tecmo]

Tekken 2 [Namco]

Ten Pin Alley [ASC]

The Adventures of Lomax in Lemmingland [Psygnosis]*

Time Commando [Activision]

Twisted Metal 2: World Tour [Sony CEA]

VR Golf [Interplay]

VR Pool [Interplay]

NOVEMBER 1996

Batman Forever [Acclaim]

Blast Chamber [Activision]

Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]

Contra: Legacy of War [Konami]

Darknet [ASC]

Disruptor [Universal]

Dragonheart [Acclaim]

FIFA Soccer 97 [Electronic Arts]

Floating Runner [T+HQ]

Fox Hunt [Capcom]

Jet Moto [Sony CEA]

Legacy of Kain [Activision]

MVP College Football '96 [Data East]

Namco Museum Vol. 2 [Namco]

NBA Jam Extreme [Acclaim]

NBA Live 97 [Electronic Arts]

NFL GameDay '97 [Sony CEA]

NHL Face Off '97 [Sony CEA]

Pandemonium [Crystal Dynamics]

Power Move Pro Wrestling [Activision]

Power Pinball [Bandai Multimedia]

Powerslave [Playmates]

Revelations [Atlus]

Soviet Strike [Electronic Arts]

Syndicate Wars [Electronic Arts]

Tecmo Stackers [Tecmo]

Tempest X [Interplay]

Tomb Raider [Eidos]

Viper [Ocean]

Wipeout XL [Sony CEA]

World Martial Arts Corp. [Bandai Multimedia]

WWF: In Your House [Acclaim]

DECEMBER 1996

BallBlazer Champions [LucasArts]

Command & Conquer [Virgin]

Cyber Gladiators [Sierra On-Line]

Daredevil Derby [Mindscape]

Deando Goes to George's [Party Corp.]

Deadly Skies [JVC]

Destruction Derby 2 [Psygnosis]

Dream Team Basketball [Eidos]

Grid Runner [Virgin]

Herc's Adventures [LucasArts]

Hyper 3-D Pinball [Virgin]

HyperBlade [Activision]

Incredible Hulk [Eidos]

Killing Time [Acclaim]

King's Field II [ASCII]

Major Damage [Capcom]

Mechwarrior 2 [Activision]

MVP College Football '96 [Data East]

NBA Hang Time [GT Interactive]

NHL Open Ice [GT Interactive]

Oblivion [Eidos]

Onside Soccer II [American Technos]

Pitball [Accolade]

Rebel Moon [GT Interactive]

Spawn [Sony CEA]

S.T.O.R.M. [American Softworks]

Street Fighter Alpha 2 [Capcom]

Street Racer [UBI Soft]

VMX Racing [Playmates]

Wing Commander IV [Origin/EA]

FIRST QUARTER 1997

Aaron Vs. Ruth [Mindscape]

Alien Striker [Atlus]

Ark of Time [Koei]

Athanon [Psygnosis]

Batman Forever: The Arcade Game [Konami]

Battlestations [Electronic Arts]

Broken Helix [Konami]

Burning Road [Playmates]

Castle of the Damned [Tecmo]

Crypt Killer [Konami]

Dark Forces [LucasArts]

new releases

Deathdrome [Viacom New Media]
 Discworld II: Missing Presumed...!? [Psygnosis]
 Disruptor [Universal Interactive]
 Fatal Fury Real Bout [Sony CE]
 Hexen [GT Interactive]
 Independence Day [FOX Interactive]
 Iron & Blood: Ravenloft [Acclaim]
 Island of Dr. Moreau [Psygnosis]
 Jack Nicklaus Golf [Accolade]
 K-1 Super Kick Boxer [T+HQ]
 Kumite: The Fighter's Edge [Konami]
 Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 Lethal Enforcers 1&2 [Konami]
 Marvel Super Heroes [Capcom]
 Mega Man 8 [Capcom]
 Mickey Thompson Virt Moto X [Playmates]
 Monster Rancher [Tecmo]
 Monster Truck Rally [Psygnosis]
 MTV's Aeon Flux [Viacom New Media]
 MTV's Slamscape [Viacom New Media]
 NBA In the Zone 2 [Konami]
 Near Death [Atlus]
 NFL Full Contact [Konami]
 Pandemonium [Crystal Dynamics]
 Peak Performance [Atlus]
 Perfect Weapon [ASC]
 Power Pigs [Titus]
 Reloaded [Interplay]
 Revelations: Persona [Atlus]
 Robotron X [Williams]
 Shining Sword [American Laser Games]
 Sign of Sun [Koei]
 Soul Edge [Namco]
 Speed King [Konami]
 Spider [BMG Interactive]
 Star Control III [Accolade]
 Suikoden [Konami]
 Tecmo Thoroughbred Derby [Tecmo]
 The City of Lost Children [Psygnosis]
 The Divide: Enemies Within [Viacom New Media]
 Tobal No. 1 [Sony CEA]
 Tomb Raider [Eidos]
 Tunnel B-1 [Sony CEA]
 War Gods [Williams]
 Werewolf: The Apocalypse [Capcom]
ANNOUNCED TITLES
 Air Combat 2 [Namco]*
 Aliens vs. Predator [FOX Interactive]
 Breath of Fire III [Capcom]
 Castlevania: The Bloodletting [Konami]
 Carnage Heart [Sony CEA]
 Deando's Escape [Warden Productions]
 Final Fantasy IV [Square]
 HardBall 6 [Accolade]
 Mega Man Neo [Capcom]
 Mega Man X4 [Capcom]
 Namco Museum Vol. 3 [Namco]
 Pitfall 3-D [Activision]
 Quake [GT Interactive]
 Raven Project [Mindscape]
 Rayman II [UBI Soft]
 Red Asphalt [Interplay]
 Resident Evil 2 [Capcom]
 Rune Master [Koei]
 Scorchers [Scavenger]
 Sentient [Psygnosis]
 Soul Master [Koei]
 Strange Golf [Mindscape]
 Surreal [American Softworks]
 Tenka [Psygnosis]*
 Test Drive: Off Road [Accolade]
 Zero Divide 2 [ZOOM]
 Zork: Nemesis [Activision]



RECENT RELEASES

3-D Baseball [Crystal Dynamics]
 4X4 Gears & Guts [American Softworks]
 Alien Trilogy [Acclaim]
 Arcade's Greatest Hits [Williams]
 Area 51 [Williams]
 Big Bass World Champ [HOT-B]
 Blast Chamber [Activision]
 Bubsy 3-D [Accolade]
 Buster Bros. Collection [Capcom]
 Command & Conquer [Virgin]
 Darknet [American Softworks]
 Dead or Alive [Tecmo]
 Deadly Skies [JVC]
 Destruction Derby [Sega of America]
 Doom [GT Interactive]
 Dream Team Basketball [Eidos]
 Fox Hunt [Capcom]
 Grand Theft Auto [BMG Interactive]
 Grid Runner [Virgin]
 Herc's Adventures [LucasArts]
 Highway 2000 [Natsume]
 Hyper 3-D Pinball [Virgin]
 HyperBlade [Activision]
 Krazy Ivan [Sega of America]
 Impact Racing [JVC]
 Incredible Hulk [Eidos]
 Iron & Blood [Take 2]
 Jewels of the Oracle [Sun Soft]
 Lethal Enforcers 1&2 [Konami]
 Madden NFL 97 [Electronic Arts]
 Major Damage [Capcom]
 MVP College Football '96 [Data East]
 NFL Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 NHL Open Ice [GT Interactive]
 Oblivion [Eidos]
 Quarterback Club '97 [Acclaim]
 Powerslave [Playmates]
 Raw Pursuit [JVC]
 Robo Pit [T+HQ]
 Scorchers [GT Interactive]
 Spot Goes to Hollywood [Virgin]
 S.T.O.R.M. [American Softworks]
 Street Fighter Alpha 2 [Capcom]
 Street Racer [UBI Soft]
 Tecmo Stackers [Tecmo]
 Tecmo Super Bowl [Tecmo]
 Tetris Plus [Jaleco]
 Varuna's Forces [JVC]
 VF Kids [Sega of America]
 Water World [Ocean]
 World Series Baseball II [Sega of America]
 World Wide Soccer 97 [Sega of America]
NOVEMBER 1996
 Bedlam [GT Interactive]
 Black Dawn [Virgin]
 Blazing Dragons [Mindscape]
 Bug Too! [Sega of America]
 Die Hard Trilogy [FOX Interactive]

Hexen [GT Interactive]
 NBA Live 97 [EA Sports]
 PGA Tour '97 [Electronic Arts]
 Pro Pinball [Interplay]
 Return Fire [Time Warner]
 Soviet Strike [Electronic Arts]
 Virtua On [Sega of America]
 VR Golf [Interplay]
 VR Soccer [Interplay]
DECEMBER 1996
 Andretti Racing [Electronic Arts]
 Area 51 [Williams]
 Armed [Interplay]
 Battlegrounds [Electronic Arts]
 Broken Helix [Konami]
 Bubsy 3D [Accolade]
 Contra: Legacy of War [Konami]
 Crypt Killer [Konami]
 Dark Savior [Sega of America]
 Daytona USA: Championship Circuit Edition [Sega of America]
 Deathdrome [Viacom New Media]
 Descent [Interplay]
 Dragon Force [Working Designs]
 Extreme Pinball [Electronic Arts]
 FIFA Soccer '97 [EA Sports]
 Fighting Vipers [Sega of America]
 Jack Nicklaus Golf [Accolade]
 Legends Football '97 [Accolade]
 Loaded [Interplay]
 Manx TT: Super Bike [Sega of America]
 Mechwarrior 2 [Activision]
 MLBPA Bottom of the 9th [Konami]
 Mr. Bones [Sega of America]
 NFL '97 [Sega of America]
 NFL Full Contact [Konami]
 NHL '97 [Electronic Arts]
 Policenauts [Konami]
 Project Overkill [Konami]
 P.T.O. 2 [Koei]
 Shredfest [Electronic Arts]
 Sonic Blast [Sega of America]
 Soviet Strike [Electronic Arts]
 Spot Goes to Hollywood [Virgin]
 Street Fighter Alpha 2 [Capcom]
 Tempest 2000 [Interplay]
 The Lost Vikings 2 [Interplay]
 The Sacred Pools [Sega of America]
 Three Dirty Dwarves [Sega of America]
 Tomb Raider [Eidos Interactive]
 Virtua Cop 2 [Sega of America]
FIRST QUARTER 1997
 Independence Day [FOX Interactive]
 Magic Knight Rayearth [Working Designs]
 Mega Man 8 [Capcom]
 Reloaded [Interplay]
 VR Baseball [Interplay]
 Zork: Nemesis [Activision]
ANNOUNCED TITLES
 Castlevania: The Bloodletting [Konami]
 Criticom 2 [Vic Tokai]
 Heart of Darkness [Virgin]
 Kumite: The Fighter's Edge [Konami]
 Lunar: Director's Cut [Working Designs]
 Marvel Super Heroes [Capcom]
 Mega Man X4 [Capcom]
 Revelations: Devil Summoner [Atlus]
 TNN Outdoors Bass Tournament '97 [American Softworks]
 VR Basketball '96 [Interplay]
 Werewolf: The Apocalypse [Capcom]
 Wild Nines [Interplay]

* - Working Title

▶ Bringing down the Imperial Walkers via the Snowspeeder's Tow Cable attack is by far one of the most satisfying (although difficult) experiences in *Shadows of the Empire*.

Star Wars: Shadows of the Empire

LucasArts' first Nintendo 64 title casts a cold shadow over the competition

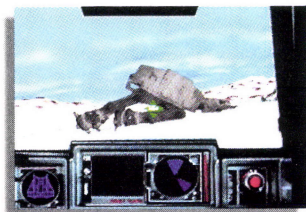
Publisher: Nintendo

Platform: Nintendo 64

Format: 96 Megabit Cartridge

Developer: LucasArts

Release: December 2



Several camera angles are available, including first-person modes (top). The cartridge's most obvious weaknesses are exposed in the little animated cut-scenes (above).

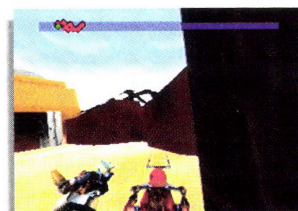
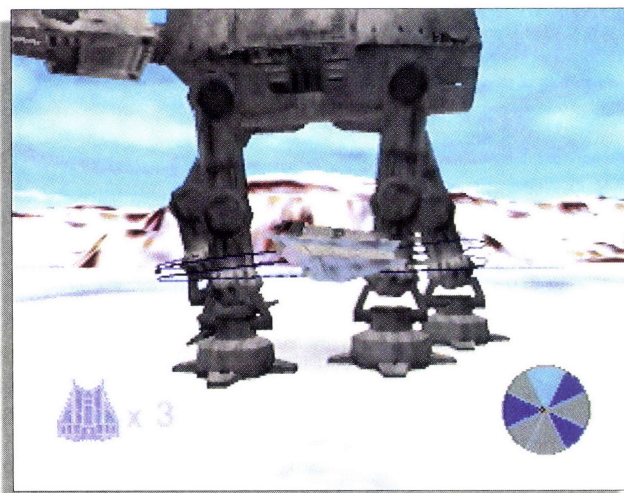
Many Star Wars games have come out since *Return of the Jedi*, and after playing this title, it seems that one thing is for sure—if the graphics keep exponentially improving like they did in this game, the next LucasArts Star Wars title may easily pass for an actual movie. While this may seem like an exaggerated statement, it really captures the aesthetic scope of what LucasArts' first Nintendo 64 title has accomplished.

Unlike many other LucasArts offerings that stay within one game concept and story line, *Shadows of the Empire* tends to jump around different points of conflict lodged somewhere

The graphics are incredible, with each Walker moving and looking like its cinematic counterpart.

inbetween *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*. The focal point of the game is centered around Dash Rendar, a bounty hunter whose final mission is to destroy Skyhook Station, a large space fortress operated by Xizor, an ally of Emperor Palpatine.

Shadows of the Empire is made up of 10 specific scenes, some of which have two or three sub-levels. Most of the levels can be divided into two categories: flying Dash Rendar's Outrider (which resembles the Millennium Falcon) in 3-D space combat scenes, or controlling him in Doom-style sequences. There are several unique scenes such as a Speeder Bike chase through Beggar's Canyon, and an incredibly difficult romp over the tops of Hover Trains.



▶ Beggar's Canyon shows off some of the creativity in this game. Gameplay is basically a brash, un-railed motorcycle race with a high-speed *Star Wars* theme.

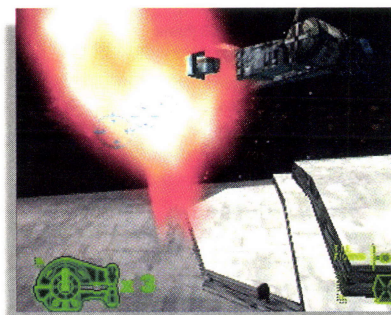
The first, and arguably the best level takes place at the ice-covered planet, Hoth, which places you in the cockpit of a low-flying Snowspeeder. On the battlefield are several computer droids attacking the rebel base

end of the course so that they may not harm Luke. Not only must you beat all of the racers, you must destroy them and their bikes before reaching the finish line by ramming them into buildings and canyon walls. The concept is what amounts to "Star Wars Road Rash"—and who wouldn't enjoy that? In this incarnation, the roads are entirely 3-D, and you have the ability of taking multiple paths to get to the end goal. If you miss crushing a biker, you simply put on the brakes, turn around and have at him again. This scene has an uncanny sense of speed, intense action.

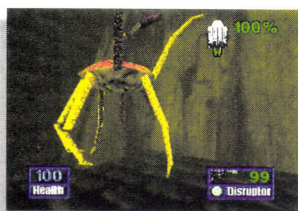
As aforementioned, many of the levels place you in direct control of Dash in what amounts to Doomesque sequences much like something taken right from Dark Forces. Of course the graphics are much more advanced, but the concept stays roughly the same. These sequences take place on a variety of environments such as the Imperial Freighter Suprosa, the Gall Spaceport or in the vermin-infested sewers

(which you must defend), along with the popular four-legged Imperial AT-ATs, and their smaller AT-ST bi-pedal escorts. Each enemy can be taken out via conventional laser blasts but other, more entertaining techniques such as wrapping the Snowspeeder's Tow Cable around the Walker's legs to fatally trip them also adds an authentic touch to the scene. The graphics are incredible, with each detailed Walker moving and looking like its cinematic counterpart. In addition, there are several optional camera angles, many of them external to accompany the internal cockpit mode.

Another of the more interesting scenes includes a Speeder Bike battle in which you must race other thug riders to the



▶ The vast graphical scope of *Shadows of the Empire*'s space-combat scenes is truly incredible, as shown by this large-scale space scene with the Outrider.



▲ You never know what you might find in the sewers beneath the Imperial City. Kinda reminds me of my days roaming the sewers of NY as a part-time Ninja Turtle.

beneath Imperial City. The enemies in these levels consist of many types, from hordes of standard Stormtroopers to the jetpack-laden Boba Fett. To dispatch these threats, there is a plethora of weapons available that can be picked up along the way that consists of heat-seeking missiles, flamethrowers and a large Disruptor bomb that explodes, filling the screen with a brilliantly lethal (even to you), green light of energy.

Although the game is roughly 80 percent complete at press time, we can safely say that the music and graphics in *Shadows of the Empire* are no less than outstanding—it will be interesting to see what else the graphic

The music truly captures the aura of *Star Wars*, which should make die-hard fans very satisfied.

wizards cook up between now and release time. The music and sound effects truly capture the aura of *Star Wars*, which should make die-hard fans very satisfied. Even more impressive is that they sound so well, that it is hard to believe that they are being transferred from a cartridge, albeit a big one. Each *Star Wars* track sounds wonderfully authentic, although some of them loop quicker than they would had they been stored on a CD-ROM.

Despite rumors of development troubles and delays, LucasArts seems poised to prove the naysayers wrong with a Dec. 2 release. Without a doubt, *Shadows of the Empire* promises to be one of the top-notch first-generation titles that will hit the Nintendo 64.

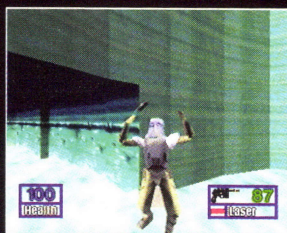


The Worlds of the Empire

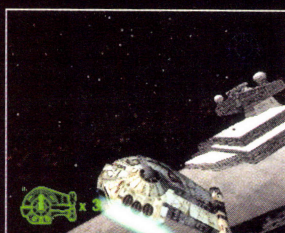
May the Force Be With You in All 10 Episodes

If this gallery doesn't demonstrate to you the diversity of gameplay in *Shadows of the Empire*, nothing will. If LucasArts manages to incorporate compelling play into each scene it will truly be a noteworthy feat. Judging from our trigger time, they aren't too far from succeeding.

Episode 1: Although it's just the first stage, it's one of the most exciting and graphically impressive in the entire game.



Episode 2: Escape From Hoth Ice Base is the first Doom-style sequence. Here, a Snowtrooper gets stunned.



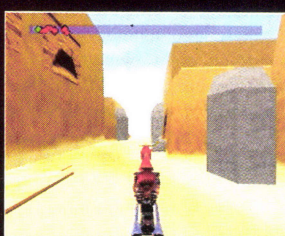
Episode 3: What *Star Wars* game would be complete without a battle in an asteroid field?



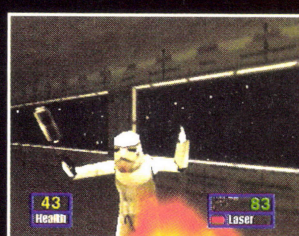
Episode 4: Hover Train hopping is pretty hard, especially when there are killer robots who want you dead.



Episode 5: The road to the Gall Spaceport is much easier once you have Boba Fett's jetpack.



Episode 6: *Star Wars* meets Road Rash in a zippy romp through Beggar's Canyon on high-speed bikes.



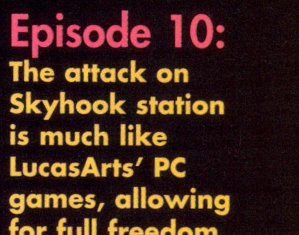
Episode 7: This Stormtrooper on the Imperial Freighter Suprosa was caught doing the Imperial Macarena.



Episode 8: The Ed Norton of the future, shown here resting on the job in his beloved grotesque sewers.



Episode 9: The eerie blue halls of Xixor's Palace aren't that far from the game's final stage.



Episode 10: The attack on Skyhook station is much like LucasArts' PC games, allowing for full freedom of movement while attacking the dreaded space station.

▶ Ah, scenic Paris. How romantic. While we're here, why don't we go to the top of the Eiffel Tower in our wrecked, battle-hardened car, jump from the top of it and shoot everyone below?

Twisted Metal 2: World Tour

Sony treats the world to their own twisted flavor of a demolition derby

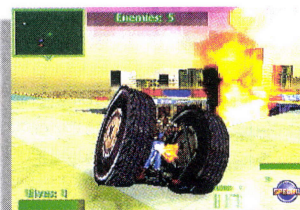
Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: SingleTrac

Release: November



▶ Twisted Metal 2's vehicles are a bit more eccentric as shown here by Axel. Notice the fire coming from his buttocks—that's what happens when you use your turbo (above).

Call it human nature. Who knows why a game with nothing more to it than crashing a bunch of cars around is so much fun, but it is.

If you liked Twisted Metal, it's almost a certainty that you'll love this one. With so simple a formula, it would be hard to imagine that any company could screw it up. While the concept and gameplay have been untouched, Twisted Metal 2 has undergone a substantial graphical upgrade along with some minor gameplay tweaking and the addition of a few notable options. Many of the old vehicles in Twisted Metal are back, souped up with new weapons, and looking much meaner and detailed than they used to. For example, there's Outlaw2, the police car that is a much more powerful version of its former self. The customized cop car now sports longer-range electrical blasts that lift opponents from the road as they get pumped full of lethal energy. Several new vehicles exist amongst the 12 selectable from the menu (we suspect there may be codes for others). Some of the most colorful new vehicles consist of a Formula 1 racing car named Twister after his windy special weapon, and Axel, a Herculean-like specimen that manually moves two humongous wheels that are great for crushing opponents. Mr. Slam is a devastating, heavy crane that picks up vehicles and repeatedly slams them into the ground enthusiastically.

In addition to new looks and built-in special weapons, World Tour offers an impressive variety of new locations. Many of the



battlefields in World Tour are much bigger than anything that the original contained, and even better, they have much more personality. Paris, for example, has the Eiffel Tower in the middle of the battlefield. You can warp to the top of it, jump down and fire at the opponents below. Moscow's Suicide Slide places you inside a radar dish with four other opponents. Other levels take place in notable locations such as New York, Antarctica and Hong Kong.

More devastating power-ups



▶ Notice the buildings that you can enter on some of the new battlefields. They can provide shelter from weapons, and also make ideal hiding places (above). Driving through these pretty fire clouds can prove hazardous, as they will catch your vehicle on fire (top).

you to drop bombs and manually detonate them as your prey drives by.

One of the main flaws in the first Twisted Metal was that the computer opponents were too easy to kill. Even without this

Mr. Slam is a devastating, heavy crane that picks up vehicles and repeatedly slams them into the ground enthusiastically.

have been added to World Tour, such as the napalm weapon, which lobbs fireballs that explode into spectacular flames when they splash onto the ground. If anyone drives through these flames, their vehicle catches on fire, and slowly loses its energy. Remote bombs also add some trickery to the game, allowing

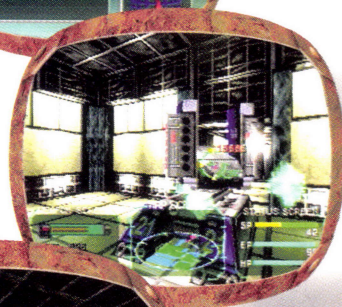
game being finished, the computer AI is more competent—dodging fire and dishing out damage at a much more efficient rate.

Without even having the final version of TM2, it is relatively easy to say that SingleTrac will deliver a very worthy sequel to the compelling original.

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▶ No longer confined to 16-Bit cartridges, EA Sports has taken the NHL series to new heights with NHL 97. The 3-D polygonal players, multiple camera views and color commentary add to the action.

NHL 97

EA gets ready to cross-check the competition with the first-ever 32-Bit NHL game

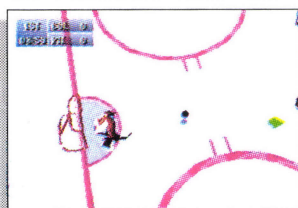
Publisher: EA Sports

Platform: PlayStation/Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Visual Concepts

Release: November

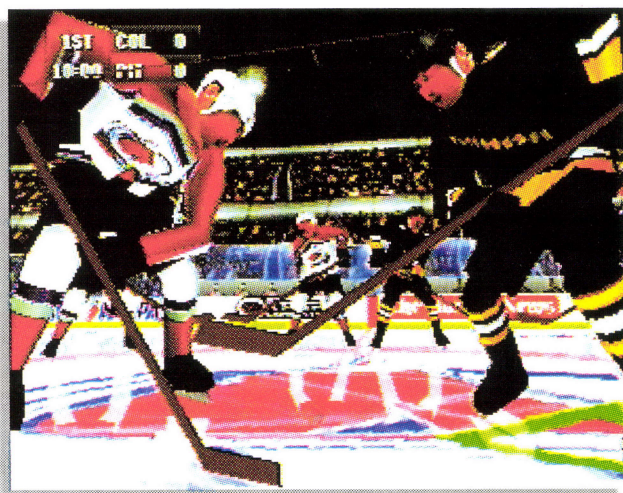


With nine different camera angles, NHL 97 offers just about every possible viewpoint to the player. Even so, NHL veterans will most likely prefer the Classic High view.

EA Sports is known for producing some of the best sports video games in existence.

Since John Madden Football broke them into the limelight back in 1990 (when they were still the Electronic Arts Sports Network or EASN), EA Sports has gone on to create more than enough award-winning sports titles, including the FIFA Soccer series, the NBA Live series, and of course, the one and only NHL Hockey series.

NHL 97 is the first 32-Bit console version of EA's famed hockey series, and with the polygon power of the PlayStation, it's coming along nicely. All of the teams, players



▶ Gameplay has always been the highlight of the NHL series, and once again, EA seems to be skating away with yet another brilliantly devised gameplay engine.

that the real NHL goalies have on their helmets (EA licensed the art from the same artist who did the real NHL helmets), further adding to the realism. There are nine different camera angles that you can play with in

John Davidson and James Brown (the version we played had some highly uninspired commentary from Davidson; hopefully they'll give him an adrenalin shot before the final release....Brown on the other hand, sounded great). Otherwise, the entire interface is really quite intuitive and it's looking great.

The gameplay has always been the staple of EA's NHL series, and so far NHL 97 is shaping up to be as good as, if not better than its predecessors. All the features that made the series great are still here, and yes, they did keep the fight sequences in (although they are kept to a minimum). The version we played is still only in Beta form, and already the overall presentation is looking sweet. If EA can keep the speed up to par with the prior Genesis versions (polygonal players are a drain on the CPU) and keep the AI as polished as it was in NHL 96, they're going to have yet another sports blockbuster on their hands in NHL 97.

ig

The players are now fully 3-D polygonal characters instead of the animated 2-D sprites from the past.

and their logos from the NHL are present, and you can create, trade or release players, as well as sign released free agents. As was in the past, there are Exhibition, Season, Playoff and Shootout Modes, and you can choose from a variety of other options before beginning play.

There are a few new additions to the game that set it apart from past NHL titles on the Genesis and Super NES. First and foremost, the players are now fully 3-D polygonal characters instead of the animated 2-D sprites that were used in the older games. This basically means that player animation will be more realistic than ever before. Each player has his name and number on the back of his jersey, and the goalies even have the official helmet art

the game (Classic High, Classic, Classic Low, Press Box, Luxury Box, Board, Isometric, Helmet and Reverse Angle), and each has its own unique feel to it. Finally, there's a new radar gun that measures the speeds of your shots (not entirely useful, but still cool...).

Thanks to the CD storage medium, there's a hefty amount of FMV and voice in the game. In addition to an amazing intro (that hopefully will be in the final version), there are some commentary scenes featuring



▶ After a brief absence on 16-Bit systems (it returned for 96), fighting seems to be back for good in hockey games. The fight ratio is low, though, as the NHL is only allowing a certain amount of fights per game.



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Killer Instinct Gold

Rare puts the finishing touches on the best home version of Killer Instinct yet

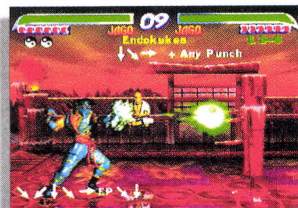
Publisher: Nintendo

Platform: Nintendo 64

Format: 96 Megabit Cartridge

Developer: Rare

Release: November 25



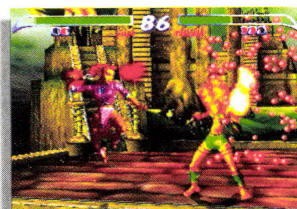
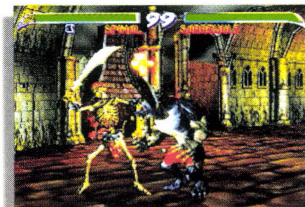
The camera now zooms in and out to provide a true sense of 3-D realism (top). There's also a new Training Mode where you can practice all of your moves (below).

When Nintendo first announced back in 1993 that they would be releasing a 64-Bit mega-machine sometime over the next two years (then known as Project Reality), one of the first games announced for it was a new fully rendered fighting game called Killer Instinct, first to be released in arcades. Utilizing some of the new "Ultra 64" technology, the game was a hit with players, raking in tons of quarters from hungry gamers.

Killer Instinct Gold for the Nintendo 64 takes the arcade sequel to KI (aptly known as KI2) and enhances it in just about every way imaginable, with bigger characters, more moves, a ton of new options and gameplay features and silky-smooth 60 frames per second animation. The version previewed here was about 70 percent complete, so portions of the game weren't yet implemented, including the blood (will be there), the finishing moves (will be there) and some of the game's hidden secrets and options (boy, will they be there).

All of the characters from the arcade version of Killer Instinct 2 are here, although Chief Thunder, Raptor, Cinder and Eyedol from the first KI are nowhere to be found (there will surely be some sort of hidden characters though, according to Rare and Nintendo...). Like the arcade games, gameplay is set

Killer Instinct Gold is jam-packed with incredible graphical effects and large characters with equally impressive animation.



All of the moves from the arcade version of Killer Instinct 2 are intact, not to mention a host of new moves and techniques, including Pressure Breakers, Rock-Paper-Scissor moves (similar to SFA's Alpha Counters) and Super Linkers. Moves can be pulled off with either the analog or digital thumbpads.

up with 2-D movement on a "2.5-D" plane, similar to Namco's Tekken or the new Street Fighter EX.

Graphically, KI Gold is looking amazing, with huge detailed characters and lush background scenery (admittedly though, the backgrounds seem less intense than the arcade version,

more repetitive (probably because of cart size constraints), while the sound effects are equal to, if not better than KI2 arcade.

There are a host of new moves, including Pressure Breakers and Rock-Paper-Scissors, and all can be practiced in the new Training Mode, where you can practice every move

The Training Mode lets you practice every move while an instructor guides you by showing the move patterns at the top of the screen.

probably to keep the gameplay flowing at a speedy pace). The backgrounds rotate frequently, and they now zoom in and out from varying lengths depending on what stage you're on and how far you are from your opponent. As far as the sounds go, the music is just like the arcade game, but it seems a bit

with an instructor who guides you by showing the move patterns at the top of the screen while you practice doing them.

KI Gold is shaping up to be a big hit, and fans of the arcade game will likely be blown away by the N64 version when it ships in late November. We'll be back with a review next issue.

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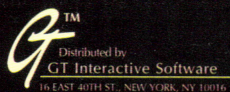
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▶ Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo (why couldn't they just call it Puzzle Fighter??) features characters from the popular DarkStalkers and Street Fighter Alpha arcade games.



Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo

Capcom pulls out a chain combo of a different kind in Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo

Super Puzzle Fighter II Turbo, an arcade game that was put on test back in early summer (previewed in IG3), had an uncertain future at the time. Fortunately, the game seems to have done well enough in Japan that Capcom has decided to port it over to the 32-Bit consoles—which is great for those who didn't get a chance to play it in their local gameroom.

Puzzle Fighter can best be described as a finely tuned derivative of Columns and Baku Baku. The game is simple: Match the colored gems with similarly colored blocks to clear them from the screen. Each block that is disintegrated falls as a colored timer block on your opponent's screen. The timer blocks count down a number of turns, at which point they turn



In terms of gameplay, momentum is the name of the game, and if you run out of steam, your opponent may be able to dig out of the mess you

opponent while doing their special moves when blocks are sent to the other side. The music is composed of classic SF and DarkStalkers tunes rearranged in a cute, bouncy style.

Currently, the game is still early, but even with only four characters in our preview copy, it has a highly addictive charm. The game should be ready for retail sometime in the first quarter of 1997. Watch for it!



Puzzle Fighter II can best be described as a finely tuned derivative of Columns and Baku Baku.

into regular colored gems. Colored gems that form rectangular blocks of four or more become power gems, which inflict serious pain to your opponent when destroyed, especially if done so in a chain reaction. Like most puzzlers, if the screen fills up, you lose.

As the game begins, each player can pick one of eight characters, all from Capcom's SFA and DarkStalkers games. Although it may seem odd that you would need to pick a character for a puzzle game, the selection is actually fairly important, as your choice determines the pattern of blocks that will fall on your opponent's screen.

created and send all of those gems back to your side, plus interest. The strategy is basically to build large power gems, and nuke them, chaining if possible, hoping to sweep your opponent's screen in one huge strike.

Graphically, the game is very cute. All of the characters are depicted in "super-deformed" style, and each character taunts their



▶ The characters duke it out in the center of the screen as you and your opponent do so in the actual game. Big chain combos make for huge Super Combo attacks!



▶ The basic idea of SPF2T is to create large gems from groups of smaller gems and then demolish them to wreak havoc on your opponent. Beware, it's very, VERY addictive!

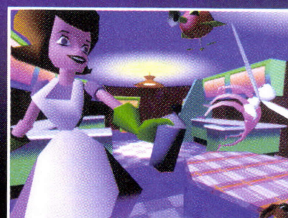
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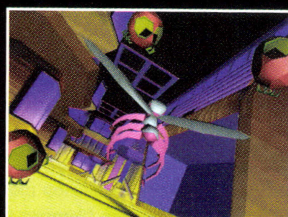
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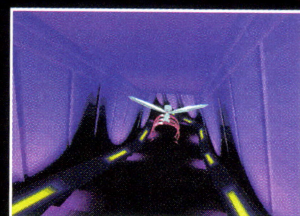
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▶ NHL Face Off returns for a second season in the latest edition of Sony's premier hockey title. Face Off '97 may still be in beta form, but the gameplay is already much better than last year's game.

NHL Face Off '97

Sony Interactive Sports returns to the ice with the much-improved NHL Face Off '97

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Killer Game

Release: November



Face Off '97 utilizes non-polygonal players, as opposed to the polygon-men from EA Sports' NHL 97. Fortunately, the choice to go "without the 'gons" was for the better, as gameplay seems much faster.

Sony's NHL Face Off was one of the hottest selling sports titles for the PlayStation last holiday season, and not without good cause. The game was good looking and had a lot of options, and to top it off there was no competition for it, since EA Sports' NHL 96 was postponed until this year. Unfortunately though, the gameplay needed a little bit of touching up, with slightly slower action than gamers were used to with EA's NHL series, and Artificial Intelligence that was less than fabulous.

That being said, however, it comes with great relief to say that Sony must have listened well to gamers' complaints about the first Face Off, because they've come back with a much-improved sequel that is far better than the first game, even in its early preview form.

Face Off '97 comes with both the NHL team and player licenses, allowing for fully realistic play stemming from last season's rosters (surely the off-season transactions will be accounted for). Additionally, you can create, trade, release, and sign new players from the options screen, giving you the final call in who

plays where, how well they perform, etc. Full-season play is available, and the Memory Card keeps track of the season's best



performers in a special Records area on the main menu.

Graphically, Face Off is looking great. The game aesthetics are for the most part done at this point (the version previewed is still in beta form), and Sony opted to go for non-polygonal characters, as opposed to EA Sports, whose NHL 97 skaters are all polygons. The trade-off? Polygonal players animate much more smoothly, but the power needed to move them fluidly produces a drain on the CPU which definitely shows in games like NHL 97, where the action seems a tad bit slower

Sony has come back with a much-improved sequel that is far better than the first Face Off.

than normal. Contrarily, Face Off '97 moves very quickly, and the lesser animation on the skaters is hardly noticeable. The rest of the game's graphics look great, and there are four separate camera views to choose from, each of which plays surprisingly well. Even the Ice Level view is highly playable, which is a first considering most games are impossible to play in that viewpoint.

The game's interface is really nice, and load times are kept to a minimum throughout. The sound effects are pretty good, and there will be a PA announcer in the final version (this preview didn't yet have any voice). Finally, for those who love



▶ NHL Face Off '97 includes four different, highly playable camera angles, including Vertical, Diagonal, Side and Ice Level. Each one is easy to use, making them actually useful for once.

to brawl, there is in fact fighting in NHL Face Off '97, although just like EA's NHL 97, it will be kept to a minimum because of National Hockey League regulations.

For a game that is still only in preview form, NHL Face Off '97 looks and plays exceptionally well. Of course the Artificial Intelligence will need to be tuned up a bit (scoring was easy, but Sony assures us that Goalie AI will be tweaked), and a lot of the options are yet to be implemented, but assuming all of that goes smoothly, hockey fans are going to be in for a great holiday season this year.

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The bright, colorful style of 2.5-D platform action that was so prominent in the original Bug! is back once again in the new and improved Bug Too!.

Bug Too!

The insect with an attitude is back, and this time he's brought along his friends

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: RealTime Assoc.

Release: November



Bug Too! improves upon the original in just about every area, with more gameplay techniques, three selectable characters and more vivid, detailed graphics.

When the Saturn hit store shelves early last May, Bug! quickly found its way to the top of every new owner's most-wanted list. For those first few months, Bug! was sitting in as a temporary mascot for the new machine and was warmly received by those left wanting after a quick romp through Clockwork Knight.

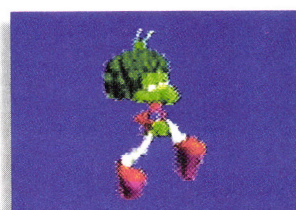
Fans of the first Bug! are in for good news as the sequel is on schedule for a Thanksgiving release—just in time to fill the void left by the hedgehog on hiatus. For those that may have missed this title, Bug! is a 3-D platform game in which the title character, a Hollywood star,

performs his feats of heroism by squashing other bugs on his way through a series of maze-like levels.

This time around, not much looks all that changed from the first Bug!—good news again for

fans who just didn't get enough last time around. Bug still wanders the paths set in gardens and swamplands built mostly of block walkways. The moving platforms that require timing and patience are back, as are Bug's abilities to walk up and down vertical walls. Bug Juice is the only salvation for the pest whose tribulations include large metal spikes, squashing brick walls and death plunges.

Bug doesn't have to face these menaces alone, though. This time his two companions,



Bug Too! introduces two new characters to the mix in addition to the hero of the original game. On the left is the jive-turkey soul-brother, Superfly, while on the right is the wondrous wonderslug, Maggot Dog.

Maggot Dog and Superfly, are along for the ride. Maggot Dog is about what one would guess, some sort of small mutant creature that has to slither its way around, but with a tongue size that would give Odie an inferiority complex. Superfly, on

Sega has added a second layer of scrolling background that creates more scenic backdrops in the game.

the other hand, is the Rick James of the insect world and has a large green 'fro to complement his funky attire.

In addition to new characters, Sega has added a second layer of scrolling background that creates more scenic backdrops like dark valleys and a spooky haunted mansion. Most of the changes seem to be cosmetic ones, such as replacing the pixelated purple and green gook that made up a ground floor with less noticeable blue water. The polygons in general also seem to conceal the game's pop-up problems a little better than the

first game did.

Bug's most significant improvement so far is a subtle one: Sega apparently listened to some playtesters because they added the one thing that Bug! needed most of all to become a less frustrating experience—a shadow. Such a small thing makes timing jumps and figuring out where to land so much easier. With any luck, Sega will also incorporate a better save game system this time so that gamers won't have to resign themselves to waiting for level select codes.

While the version at hand is very early and lacks both music and sound effects, Sega is promising to address that one last complaint so often mentioned about Bug!—they're adding more music. Hopefully whatever selections they go with won't be as repetitive as the first game's music, of which there wasn't enough of. It's also never too early to start looking forward to Bug, Maggot Dog and Superfly's one-liners since Bug!'s voice samples were possibly the most outstanding thing about the first game.

For now, try to find some contentment with these early screenshots, and turkey day will be here soon enough.

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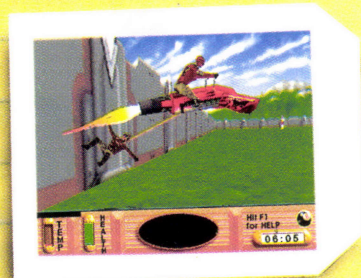


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PARAGRAPH (3), SUBSECTION (1c):

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Pandemonium!

Crystal Dynamics brings 2-D platform greatness to life in a glorious 3-D world

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release: November



Pandemonium! really stands out with great graphics and smooth scaling and scrolling effects. This is how the next generation of platformers is supposed to look.

It's that time of year again and already the platform games are starting to pour in. This year is a special year for the action platform games, though, because so much is on the line. All of the industry's big companies are hoping to latch on to broader audiences by offering games that appeal to more than just the niche markets that enthusiasts have already saturated.

Perhaps what is more important to the average gamer, though, is the sheer amount of money and effort these companies have spent to redefine what a platform game is. This surely isn't the first time the words "it's like a 2-D game with 3-D graphics" have been put to

CD's goal was to create a visually outstanding game with the play mechanics of a tried-and-true platformer.

paper, but it seems like the only way to accurately describe what's going on here. That phrase probably applies moreso to Crystal Dynamics' upcoming Pandemonium! than to any other game. While other engines have compromised the design in small ways for a little freedom in the z-axis, Pandemonium! is 100 percent 2-D gaming.

Its two characters are a sorceress named Nicki and her companion Fargus, a colorful jester. Their basic abilities include jumping, bouncing, shooting fireworks and the traditional left and right moving. This must seem terribly confusing to anyone looking at the realtime polygonal graphics found in any of Pandemonium!'s pictures or demos because with



the exception of the one constant parallax background, all of the game's courses are built entirely of polygons. It's easy to see that CD's goal in this game was to create a visually outstanding presentation with the clear-cut play mechanics of a tried-and-true platformer.

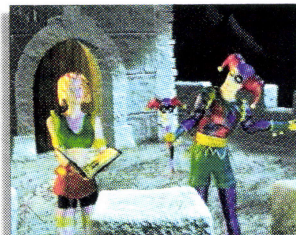
Even in this preview version, it can be safely said that the outstanding presentation qualification was met wholly. Each

the levels. Inside, blocks and gates are lit up by torch lights that can only be matched by the electric spheres and ice-laden environments later in the game.

Unique accompanying music greatly enhances the experience with interesting themes accentuated by wind chimes and claps of thunder. Sound effects include the ever-present boing of a springy jump and a variety of crushing sounds as obstacles fall in the pathways.

What truly makes the game's 3-D effects seem impressive, though, is its use of multiple camera angles. Each time the character traverses a plane, the camera will shift to new positions as if it were being carefully controlled by a movie director. Yet each time the camera rotates from one view to the next, the left and right controls remain intact, giving the player a steady gameplay architecture that's uninterrupted by periods of readjustment.

This basic concept seems much like that of Boss Studio's upcoming game Spider, and if this early version of the game is any indication, the industry may have found a winning combination. Uncertain of how to introduce Sonic to a 3-D world, it might even do Sega some good to sit up and take notes. While we can't make any guarantees at this point, the concept certainly looks promising.



► Pandemonium!'s main characters, Nicki and Fargus, are brought to life in a visually impressive rendered FMV intro sequence.



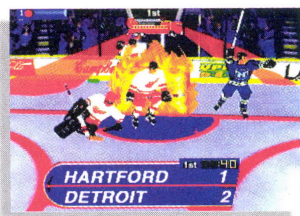
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▶ As you might imagine, a lot of things can happen to a hockey goal. Getting engulfed in flames is not one of the first things that comes to mind, but it certainly is rewarding to the goal scorer.



Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey

Williams' arcade translation breaks the ice as the N64's first sports game

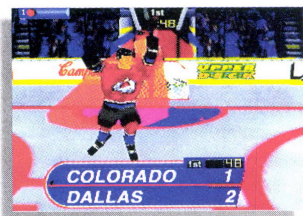
Publisher: Williams

Platform: Nintendo 64

Format: 64 Megabit Cartridge

Developer: Warner Interactive

Release: November



▶ Scoring on your opponent and rubbing it in his face while basking in the red glow of the scoring light... (top) ...can lead to some serious friction afterward. (above)

One of the biggest worries potential buyers of the Nintendo 64 have had is the lack of sports titles announced for the system. If Wayne Gretzky's 3D Hockey by Williams is a precursor of the quality of sports games to come, then these concerned individuals have absolutely nothing to worry about.

Gretzky Hockey is essentially two hockey games in one. First, there is the nearly exact arcade translation which pits two three-man hockey teams against one another in a fast-paced, high-adrenaline, body-check fest. The game plays very similar to NHL Open Ice (which is published by the same company), but of course, the graphics on the N64 title are light-years ahead, sporting fluidly moving, completely rendered 3-D hockey players.

Gameplay in the arcade mode is pretty straightforward and easy to learn, although many of



▶ The overhead camera view is just one of six angles from which you can view the action. Notice the bright-red, FOX-esque hockey puck streaking toward the goalie. Fortunately, for realism purists, the option to turn off the streak is available.

cosmetic results such as knocking the net from where it sits, or actually setting it on fire with a wicked turbo shot. The game even borrows from the controversial FOX "glowing puck" which streaks red as it hits high speeds. Purists will be glad there is an option to turn that feature off.

If you get sick of pure arcade action, and want more of a real

narrates the action well, but if you'd rather not listen to him, you can choose to turn him off. Six camera angles are available to view the game from, although many of them are relatively similar to one another. Most notable is the instant-replay camera which can be moved anywhere on

the screen by using the analog controller to view the replay from a custom vantage point.

While the version of Gretzky Hockey we previewed was only about 70 percent complete, what we saw was very impressive. Sports and action fans alike should look forward to what looks like an almost certain hit.

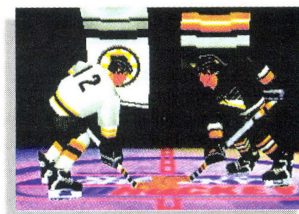
ig

Dirtier moves, such as tripping and grabbing someone to pummel them in a fight, are also part of the game's repertoire.

the game's more powerful and tricky moves may take a bit longer to master. The buttons are simple, consisting of shoot, pass and turbo. By hitting combinations of them, many special moves can be executed such as cross-checks, one-timers and diving blocks. Dirtier moves, such as tripping and grabbing someone to pummel them in a fight, are also part of the repertoire. Some of the button combinations will result in purely

hockey game, Gretzky offers a simulation mode. This gameplay feature allows for a five-on-five (and even four-on-four) matchup with full-season play, and statistical tracking that is saved on the N64's Memory Pack that plugs into the controller. All of the real penalties work in the simulation mode, and the game includes strategic elements like line changes and player fatigue.

Both modes of the game feature a roaring announcer that



▶ These screens really emphasize the amount of detail that went into the creation of each of the players.



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▶ Visuals like the one pictured here are now possible with the marvelously revamped NBA Live polygon engine. If you want to rub the slam in someone's face, there is an optional replay feature.

NBA Live 97

EA Sports gives their popular b-ball series a stunning full 3-D makeover

Publisher: EA Sports

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: EA Canada

Release: November

The first 32-Bit version of NBA Live was met with mixed reviews and skepticism. Although the game played well, like the older 16-Bit versions, the graphics were somewhat sloppy, comprised of an uneven balance of 3-D arenas and undetailed 2-D players.

NBA Live 97 represents one of the shortest turnaround times between two versions of this popular line of basketball titles ever. Having said that, it nearly encompasses everything the first 32-Bit version of NBA Live should have had.

Gone are the messy 2-D graphics, replaced with more eye-appealing 3-D polygonal

to see highlights.

The graphics aren't the lone upgrade in Live 97, as EA has substantially beefed up many of the "off-court" options in the game. EA's infamous (and popular) Create-A-Player feature is available, allowing the user to create any sort of player at any position, alter his talent ratings and place him on any NBA team. This option is best used to create the NBA players unlicensed in the game such as Charles Barkley or Michael Jordan, and has a certain novelty to it when you can place yourself on the same court with other NBA players. Even relatively unimportant player back-

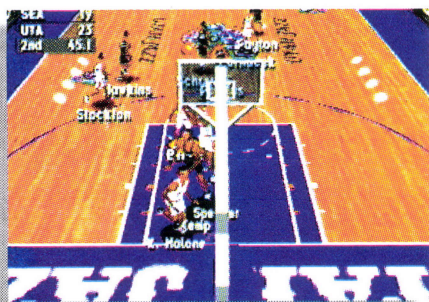


▶ There are more options and features in Live 97 than many other basketball titles combined. Hopefully, they will all pan out when the final version is released.

attributes such as skin color and head size had not been completed. These created players (in addition to real NBA players) may be traded between teams, released and even drafted, adding some off-season aspects to the title while enabling users to keep team rosters up to date with free-agency moves.

The strategic aspects of Live have been improved dramatically, with the addition of coaching features such as defensive matchups, and many more plays on the offensive and defensive sides of the ball. New "quickset" plays are available to be called spontaneously on court, complete with descriptive moving diagrams selectable during the pause menu.

NBA Live 97 promises to be a substantial improvement over the last version both visibly and gameplay-wise. With sloppy graphics and the rest of their 32-Bit hurdles now behind them, EA Sports looks to be on-track with what has the potential to be the best console basketball game on the market. Of course, Sony could have something to say about that...



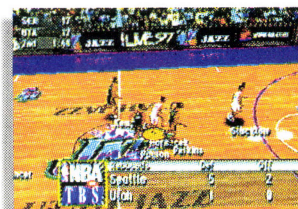
Gone are the messy 2-D graphics, replaced with more eye-appealing 3-D polygonal characters.

characters that resemble those in Sony's NBA Shootout.

However, unlike

Shootout, the players control and move very well while still retaining the excellent game-play that powered previous versions of NBA Live. The one-two punch of 3-D players and arenas not only makes the game aesthetically appealing, but it also makes the game's several optional camera angles more playable. Several are available including the classic, sky and sideline cameras. The one that benefits the most is the "slam" camera positioned right behind the glass to give you the best vantage point

ground information such as his school and years in the league can be changed. At press time, much of the interface for this feature was available, but many of the options such as those that allow you to visibly change physical



▶ First, Madden NFL 97 was aligned with FOX, and now NBA Live 97 sports a TBS license. It's too bad TBS doesn't have any catchy theme music like FOX, though...



▶ NBA Live's camera angles are much more effective now that everything is in 3-D—and that's a good thing since there are quite a few different ones to choose from.

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1. If you dislocate something, put it back.
2. Kickers aren't football players. They're kickers.
3. If referees could see everything, instant replay wouldn't be an issue.
4. Don't let your center eat chili at pre-game meals.
5. If you get injured for a game, dress posh for the sidelines.
6. The only thing that can move an offensive lineman is a defensive lineman.
7. Ahead by one, go for two. Ahead by two, go for one.
8. End zone break-dance moves always make the highlights.
9. Astroturf is excellent for miniature golf courses.
10. Ronnie Lott retired.

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▶ This picture shows many of the splendid enhancements Jedi Knight possesses over its predecessor, and over much of the competition. This game looks to have a flavor all its own.

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

LucasArts grants gamers knighthood in the forceful sequel to Dark Forces

Publisher: LucasArts

Platform: PC

Format: PC CD-ROM

Developer: LucasArts

Release: First Quarter '97



▶ The addition of the lightsaber is to many Star Wars fans, one of the biggest improvements and final puzzle pieces to make this a complete Dark Forces game.

Dark Forces was LucasArts' first attempt to bring a first-person action shooter into their line of Star Wars-based games.

Unfortunately, its extensive use of characters from the Star Wars trilogy failed to make up for its lack of innovation and network play. Although it enjoyed a certain amount of popularity, it was a disappointment to many. There is no doubt that LucasArts has set out to make Jedi Knight a game which addresses both the shortcomings of Dark Forces, while going further in an attempt to create a unique Star Wars experience.

The graphics engine is

The graphics are being completely rewritten and are much more advanced than Dark Forces' were.

completely rewritten and much more advanced than Dark Forces' was, but more importantly, the entire gameplay concept has been revamped. Jedi Knight borrows from RPGs with choices that affect how the game progresses, and a character experience system that lets you modify individual character traits as you go along. This is perhaps most important in how it affects another new aspect of the game: Your character can now use the Force, and precisely which abilities may be used depends on what you choose to do as the game progresses.

In short, aside from the basic action-game structure, Jedi Knight has almost nothing in common with Dark Forces, having moved ahead in an attempt to create a distinctive,

leading-edge game.

Jedi Knight is, in fact, a technically advanced game. To start with, cinema-quality cutscenes are rendered at a high resolution and run at a smooth frame rate. Of course, the graphics

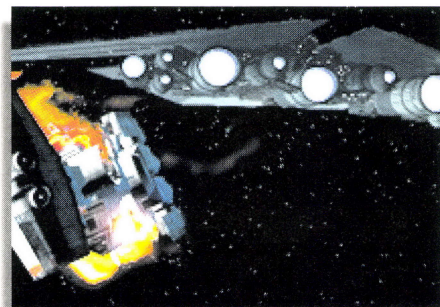


engine is the important part, and it doesn't disappoint. Like Quake, it is fully 3-D, both in terms of level design and of

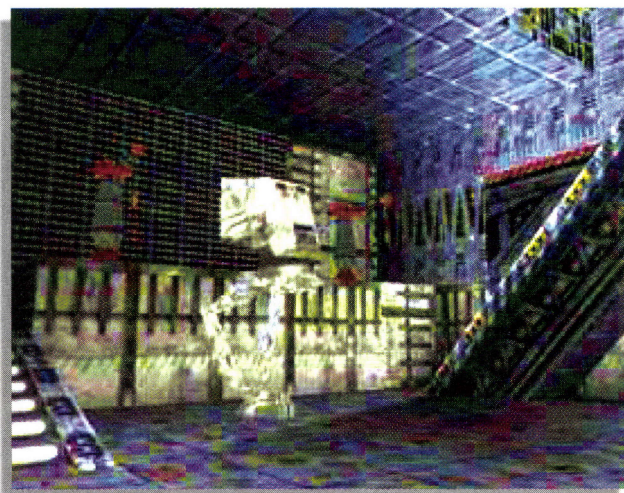
the rendering itself. The engine is designed to support parts of levels moving in arbitrary directions, to allow things like doors which swing open and lifts which move diagonally upward. Realtime lighting is executed with a nice, smoothly shaded effect, and the engine also supports colored lighting and translucencies. Characters are rendered as 3-D models, and LucasArts has developed their own animation technique which allows characters to be doing several things at

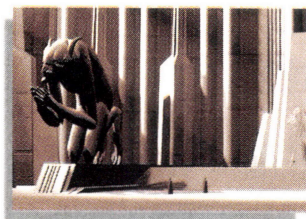
once on screen, with the goal being that you will be able to see every motion of a character firing and reloading as they jump through the air. The overall effect will be enhanced by the fact that there will be a lot going on in the environment at any given time, with robotic arms moving, and ships flying back and forth. Players with a high-end Pentium will most likely be running the game in 640x480, while anyone with a Pentium and a 3-D accelerator will not only be able to run in 640x480, but they will also get the benefit of built-in graphical enhancements such as bilinear interpolation, a method of preventing any pixellation by smoothing textures in realtime.

Jedi Knight incorporates RPG elements to make this into a Star Wars game, instead of a Doom clone with Star Wars characters. The minor improvements expected in a sequel are all there: New monsters, weapons and missions will face you. As with the first, each weapon has a primary and secondary option, with each one producing a somewhat different



▶ Like so many other LucasArts titles before it, the full-motion video sequences in Jedi Knight are unparalleled in terms of cinematic quality and flare. They're damned good at making explosions too.





Boba Fett and numerous other characters from the *Star Wars* trilogy make more appearances in *Jedi Knight*. Even better, you probably get to kill them.

effect (for instance, timed mines have an ability to become proximity mines). The major addition in the weapons department is certainly the lightsaber, as it

The major new addition in the weapons department is certainly the lightsaber...

serves to both emphasize the *Star Wars* basis of the game, and to introduce a much more significant element of hand-to-hand combat. Enemy AI will be superior to that of the original, with enemies displaying differing behaviors, including running to bring reinforcements. However, the greater emphasis on plot and role-playing is most likely the single biggest improvement in *Jedi Knight*, really allowing the player to feel a part of the

Star Wars universe. In the process of dealing with seven distinctive dark Jedi Knights, you will make many choices that affect your character, including which abilities to strengthen, and, most importantly, whether to embrace the Dark or Light side of the Force. The choice will determine which abilities are available to you. The powers granted by use of the Force include blocking laser blasts with the lightsaber; pulling objects toward you, choking others from a distance and throwing objects at people.

Just as important is the inclusion of network play. Multiplayer options will include free-for-alls, team play and territorial play. Moreover, *Jedi Knight* will support Internet-based play even more completely than *Quake*. *Jedi Knight* goes a step further by including sign-up information for an ISP, so that users with modems will be able to play

over the Internet out of the box.

With the amount of work LucasArts has put into addressing deficiencies in *Dark Forces*, and keeping *Jedi Knight* technically on the leading edge while still maintaining a coherent and distinctively *Star Wars* feel to the game, it looks like fans of *Star Wars* and action games will be very pleased when it reaches the home market sometime in early 1997.

ig



Like id Software's *Quake* as well as other competitors on the horizon, *Dark Forces II* features a fully 3-D engine with completely rendered characters, allowing for full freedom of movement.

Dark Forces makes its way to the PS



Though *Dark Forces* might seem a little outdated to avid PC players, it stacks up rather nicely against most of the PlayStation's competition at this stage of development.

Dark Forces is essentially a slight upgrade over the original *Doom* 3-D engine that took PC gamers by storm so many years ago. There are a few new features that make this technically superior than *Doom*, however. For example, your character can look up and down, allowing for multilevel gunfights, which adds an extra dimension to the game. Jumping also plays a large part in some of the harder levels.

Dark Forces revolves around Kyle Katarn, a bounty hunter hired by the Rebellion. The plot of the game moves along via transitional video sequences, making the game a little bit more involving than *Doom*. Kyle must finish missions by completing specific objectives. For the most part, these objectives are simply met by shooting everything in sight. The main advantage LucasArts' first-person shooter has over others is that, well, it just feels like *Star Wars*. Aside from fighting, which mainly

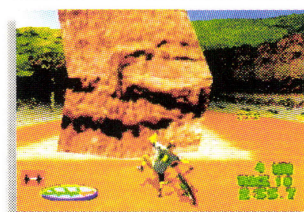
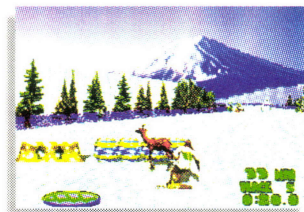
consists of familiar enemies from the silver screen, like Stormtroopers and Imperial Guards, the environments that make up the playfields are well-constructed. They use detailed textures that excel at creating the feel of playing within the *Star Wars* universe. Some of these locations include Jabba's Palace, the Death Star, and an Imperial Ice Fortress.

All things considered, *Star Wars* fans should be very satisfied. *Dark Forces* isn't an innovative title, but at this stage of completion, it looks like it's shaping up as one of the better titles of its genre.



There are Stormtroopers all over *Dark Forces*. It would be a good guess that you'll probably kill about 1,000 or so of the buggers by the end of the game.

Goodbye street luge, hello snowboard. Sony dumped the Luge in favor of what seems like a natural for the games—snowboarding. The only problem is that the course is littered with reindeer. Damn Rudolph.



2 Xtreme

Sony takes it to the extreme with another round of gear-grinding, blade-bombing, board-blitzin' goodness

Publisher: Sony CEA

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sony CEA

Release: November

Generation X may not be as prolific as generations past, but give them credit for developing some of the most intense new sports imaginable with what were formally harmless recreational "toys."

Sony captured the essence of these new sports with ESPN Extreme Games, released a year ago, and they're now currently poised to release its sequel, 2 Xtreme. Strangely missing from the mix is ESPN's endorsement, but whatever the reason for this, the game doesn't suffer from the networks departure.

Of course, some things never change—kicking and punching are still some of the gameplay mainstays.

2 Xtreme gives players more depth than before, offering 12 tracks instead of five and a much needed replacement event (snowboarding) for the far-fetched street luge. In addition, a new scoring system rewards players for performing tricks as well as passing through gates. Also new are strength, speed, health, and jumping power-ups that can be gathered along the courses. Another interesting twist lets players gather keys to control the environment, such as changing street lights, or even preventing avalanches, etc.

Each of the four events: mountain biking, skateboarding, snowboarding and in-line skating takes place in exotic locales,



characterized by the local people, animals and vehicles. Of course, they serve as nothing more than obstacles and speed-bumps to be avoided as players race against other "extremists." Three courses per event are included, adding to the replayability of the game.

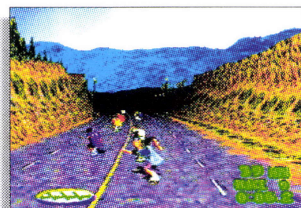
The motion-capture technology is well done, creating convincing character animations, especially during the tricks they perform. Of course some things never change—kicking and punching opponents in a race are still some of the gameplay mainstays, making two-player split-screen play quite entertaining.

Improving 2 Xtreme's depth are new features that let players do more in a race than just trying to land in first place.

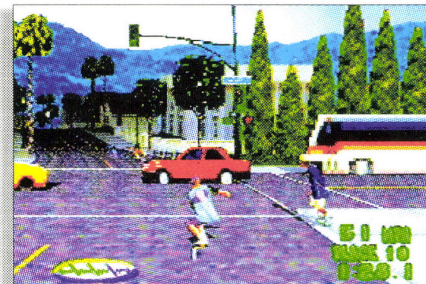
Performing tricks and gathering keys and power-ups is just as challenging and creates more ways to win in the overall point standings.

At this early stage of the game's development, everything in place is easily equal to or better than the quality of the first Extreme Games. A few minor gameplay tweaks here and there and we'll be looking at another great title this holiday season.

ig



Cover long distances and collect frequent-flyer miles when catching air on the blades. Midair maneuvers are rewarded by trick points at the end of the race.



Grabbing special keys along the way enables players to change street signals on the fly, greatly improving their chances of winning the competition and engaging in messy collisions with cars.

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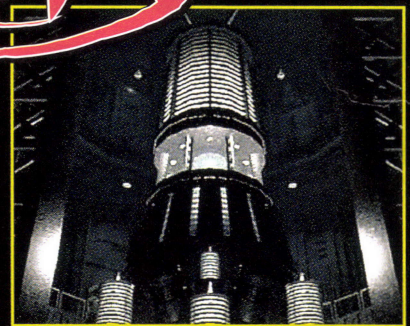
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▶ Pitball has an outstanding intro—let's hope that the gameplay turns out as good as the FMV when it ships (right). Pitball's camera angles provide some interesting visuals during battle (far right).



Pitball

Accolade strives to make their new action title amount to a space-age slam

Publisher: Accolade

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

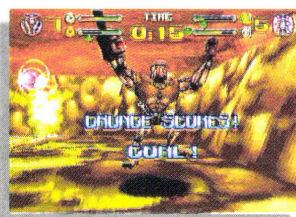
Developer: Warner Interactive

Release: November

Picture a two-on-two basketball game in an enclosed arena. The baskets have been replaced with holes embedded in the north and south walls, and the combatants look like 1980s B-movie rejects. Welcome to Pitball.

Pitball's game concept is in the same vein as other pseudo-sports games such as Speedball II. The action is very much like a sports game, but the rules and settings are entirely unsporting. The aim is simple: Score more goals than the other team to proceed to the next level.

The process to achieve those goals is a bit more complicated. Pitball is much like high-tech basketball with two-man teams and simple Street Fighter-like moves. There are the simple controls such as pass or shoot, but once you get a feel for the game's controls, other more complicated moves such as jumping attacks, slam dunks and special "death moves" are available through a combination of button presses. The orb, which is a glowing ball that provides the impetus for scoring, can also serve as a splendid weapon when it is thrown at opponents. While a character has possession of the all-powerful orb, their selection of moves increases, allowing for more diverse and powerful moves. These attacks are excellent for knocking defenders out of the way to get a clear shot at the goal. On defense, they are best used to make an offensive player fumble the orb. Special power-ups are available to beef up your team's offensive and defensive abilities such as anti-gravity boots, several types of



▲ Kids like nothing more than this oddball variation of the end-zone celebrations in the NFL.

shields and power gloves.

Pitball's tag-teams of polygonal combatants are a little strange to say the least. The teams consist of creatures such as robotic gorillas, lanky robots

Pitball is much like high-tech basketball with two-man teams and simple Street Fighter-like moves.

and large slugs in metallic environmental suits. Each creature has its own arena, situated on their home planet. The main difference between each pit-like battleground is mainly aesthetic, but there are a few other environmental differences, such as the amount of gravity. The goals in the game are situated above your character's height, which makes this variable rather important since you must jump to



▲ There are so many strange players in this game that you might wish for a boring humanoid team.

aim the ball properly. Different levels of gravity can play havoc with the timing necessary to score, not to mention the orb's physics on ricochets.

Aside from just having a straightforward arcade mode, Pitball also allows you to manage a team. There is full-season play, complete with scheduling, equipment purchases and sponsorships that can be had to pump money into your team's coffers. Like boxing, bribery is also allowed.

Pitball has many play elements and features that could make it a very solid title. Not a typical Accolade-style title, it will be interesting to see how it comes together when it is released this year.

ig



▶ This elevated camera angle may not be the most eye-pleasing, but it is the most useable (top). In season mode, you must win matches to upgrade your weapons (above).

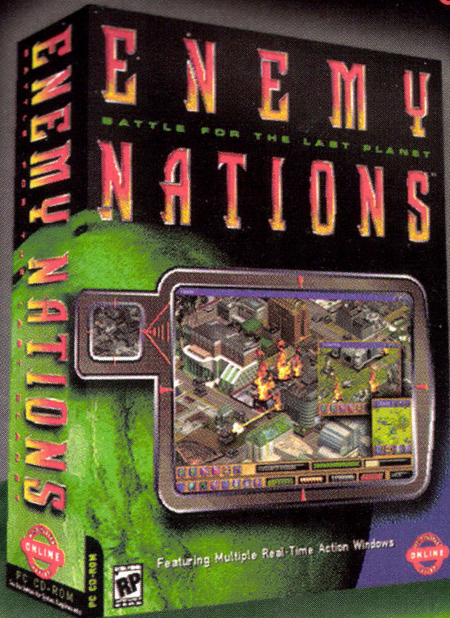


▶ Here's what it would look like if you had two, big, metallic guys trying to defend a fast-break. Tell me this wouldn't sell tickets and luxury box suites.

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Tempest 2000

Interplay takes the Jaguar's best game and ports it to Saturn

Publisher: Interplay

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: High Voltage

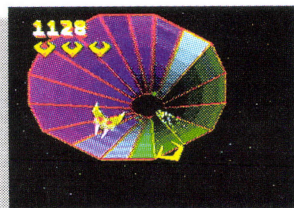
Release: December

Unlike Tempest X, which has been enhanced to take advantage of many of the Sony PlayStation's graphical effects, Tempest 2000 has been basically untouched during its conversion over from the Atari Jaguar. This isn't a bad thing, however, as Tempest 2000 is a relatively ageless title, much like its arcade predecessor.

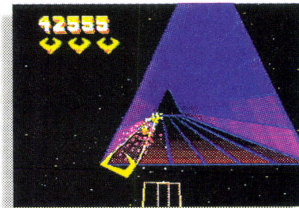
Tempest 2000 is, of course, a remake of the popular arcade game sporting an angular, clamp-like spaceship that moves along an electric web. Gone are the simple straight-line vector



Vector graphics never looked so good! Tempest 2000 for the Saturn is a perfect port of the Atari Jaguar (R.I.P.) version that came out when the Jag was first released.



The gameplay is as simple as rotating the controller and firing your weapons to attack your enemies. The control is a little sluggish with a standard control pad, which is why we feel it would be beneficial to offer analog support via the Saturn's 3-D Control Pad (which is perfect for this type of game).



graphics and archaic sound, now replaced with vibrant visuals and some of the best music ever found in a home game.

Tempest 2000 sports six modes of play including several variations of Tempest Plus and Tempest Duel to accompany the main course.

Enhancements over the arcade Tempest are numerous, and are very obvious after glancing at the provided screenshots. The web is now filled with varying shades of color, and minor light sourcing relative to objects and explosions on the screen. The music consists of several hopping techno-tracks, taken directly from the limited-edition Tempest 2000 sound-

track that came bundled with the now-defunct Jaguar CD.

Tempest Duel is a multiplayer mode that pits you and an opponent (human or CPU) against each other in a split-screen interface that shows each side of the web. During battle, CPU enemies still attack both players from all sides, adding to the frenzied battle.

Even without Tempest X's enhancements, Tempest 2000 will still be an excellent title. The one thing Interplay needs to add in order to push this one over the top is support for Sega's new analog 3-D Control Pad. Sadly, as of press time, there are still no plans to do so. However, we can still hope...



Tempest X

Yet another arcade classic is reborn for the PlayStation

Publisher: Interplay

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: High Voltage

Release: December

Interplay may make history by being the first company to release a "remake" of a popular classic arcade game.

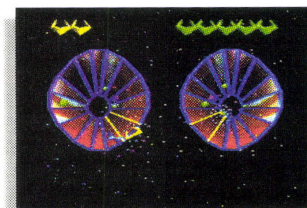
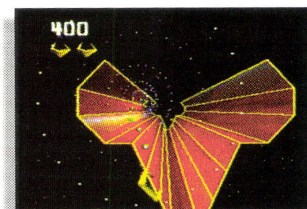
As the three or four owners of the Atari Jaguar most certainly know, Tempest 2000 was probably the best game released for the now-defunct 64-Bit system. One of the most unfortunate things about the Jaguar dying is that the marvelous redux of Tempest garnered little trigger time by gamers due to the obscurity of the system that it resided on.

Thanks to Interplay, this will no longer be a problem, as the widely owned PlayStation will be graced with an enhanced version of the game that took Jaguar owners by storm.

Tempest X features a variety of new play modes and more

audio and graphical treats than any amount of industry buzz words could describe. Six modes of action are available such as Tempest 2000, Tempest Plus and Trippy 2000. The latter easily wins the prize for most useless but interesting game feature with its awesome psychedelic splashes of fast-moving colors and effects. Also available is the Tempest X Duel which pits two human opponents against each other on the electric web via a pseudo split-screen. Truly nostalgic players are also catered to with the Traditional Mode, which allows them to play an exact replica of the arcade Tempest as it was in its glory years.

Of course, all of these extras are secondary to the main attraction, the wonderfully enhanced Tempest X. Nothing was left on the drawing board with this all-out assault on the senses. Audibly the game is near perfect, with a great number of jamming CD-spoiled techno tracks and outstanding visuals. This game has a lot more eye-candy than its Atari Jaguar (and soon Sega Saturn) counterpart, which altogether is an impres-



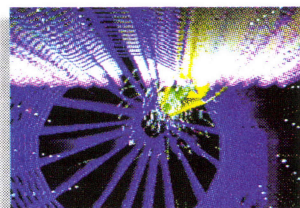
Vividly colored webs and plenty of effects keep Tempest's visuals active (top). The Two-player Mode adds a whole new dimension to gameplay (above).

sive feat indeed.

By adding a few extra modes and not fixing anything that isn't broken, Tempest X looks like it will be a sure winner on the PlayStation. This time around, there's much larger of an installed userbase out there to truly appreciate this classic among classics.



We really don't know who came up with the idea for the Trippy 2000 Mode in Tempest X, but we'd bet he's a big fan of Bob Marley and Cypress Hill...





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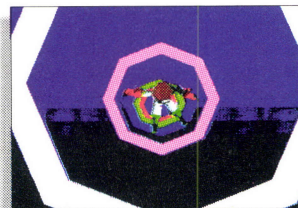
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Robotron X

Williams brings back another arcade blast from the past

The success of Tempest 2000 launched a new genre of games that consists of modernized versions of popular classic arcade titles, typically from the early '80s. It only makes sense that Williams stake their claim in this niche market since they are one of the oldest remaining arcade manufacturers, thus enabling them to tap a stockpile of classic arcade assets.

Robotron was undoubtedly one of the most high-octane games of its time, requiring quick reactions at break-neck speeds. The goal, quite simply, is to maniacally obliterate never-ending



Here's the method of transport between each completed level. The whole experience is not unlike being flushed down a toilet head first (or so they tell us).

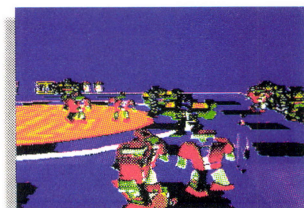
waves of enemies while keeping yourself alive. If you want to feel a sense of fighting for a more noble cause, there are a few innocent family members that need rescuing along the way—but they're not really important.

This title might have been more aptly named Robotron 3-D, since that seems to be the main essence of its 32-Bit makeover. Every enemy and character on the screen is well-detailed, made up of 3-D Gouraud-shaded polygons that explode and shatter into pieces when they take gunfire. Action takes place on a 3-D square playfield which is presented by a shifting camera that zooms in

and out, depending on the location and actions of characters on the screen. In the arcade, the game control accentuated the action, consisting of two joysticks, one used for firing in eight directions, while the second stick moved your character on the screen. The PS pad is used in the same spirit using its four buttons for directional firing.

From this early first look, Williams has preserved the flavor of the original game, but the real question will be whether or not modern gamers are ready for a pure and simple form of nonstop action.

ig



This is a good example of the game's roving camera. As the action nears the foreground, the camera zooms and pans in for the best vantage point.

Publisher: Williams

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Player One

Release: November



The carnage on screen is rather spectacular as enemies shatter in oh-so-many pieces upon meeting your laser blasts. Notice the surrounding shockwaves. Oh! Ah!

Nanotek Warrior

Virgin's creative 3-D shooter shows nano-rific potential

Small robots have overrun their creators in the 23rd century, and nothing's worse than angry robots. To stop those pesky critters, you must pilot a small spaceship through 10 microscopic courses, doing away with the nano-turncoats. Sounds as good a reason as any to create a fast-paced shooter.

Credit Virgin and Tetragon for creating an original 3-D shooter when so many others fall into the dull, "cookie-cutter" category. Nanotek Warrior places you in control of a small spaceship that must traverse long, twisting, pole-like structures and deep, narrow tunnels. Nanotek's game control and mechanics is unique. By turning left and right, you scroll horizontally along the face of the pole. If you move left from one



At the end of each level, there is the obligatory end boss. This one morphs between several shapes.



Enemies attack from all angles and vertical levels as you speed down each cylindrical "track."

point, you will be back at the same point after you have moved over the entire 360-degrees of the "track." You can also move forward and back to a certain degree. The scrolling is seamless, as objects on the cylindrical track pop in and out of view as your ship skims horizontally across the surface. These objects are comprised of many different enemy ships that look like anything from spiders to totally freaky objects. In addition to avoiding these enemies, obstacles such as towers and other protrusions are amply spread throughout the track, ready to drain your ship's shields upon impact.

To avoid disaster, you have the choice of destroying the

obstacles, or avoiding them through a variety of maneuvers. Your ship has the normal complement of lasers, and a variety of special weapons that wreak havoc on large groups of enemies at once. What makes this game stand out is the variety of control you have over your craft. By pressing buttons, your ship can leap over obstacles, barrel-roll, angle its fire and sprint forward. It gives you great latitude in the amount of control it gives your craft—and that's a good thing. Many traps require tricky flying to squeeze your ship through.

With promising gameplay and a welcome dose of creativity, Virgin's new shooter looks to be on track to success.

ig



In the tunnel levels, the obstacles become a little more creative and deadly. In this level, a twisting fan-like object must be flown through quickly as it rotates.

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MechWarrior 2

Activision's
robotic rumble
stomps onto
the Saturn

Publisher: Activision

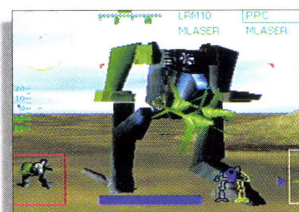
Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

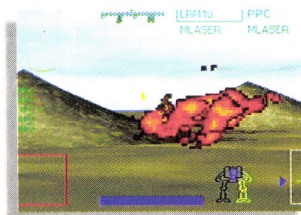
Developer: Activision

Release: First Quarter '97

Activision has begun work on yet another port of their best-selling PC game, MechWarrior 2. Oddly enough, the first console version of the game has appeared for the Saturn, a machine not known among developers for its polygonal prowess, despite the evidence provided by many of Sega's own games. The Saturn version of MechWarrior 2 is a direct port of the PC and Windows 95 versions, throwing players into the cockpits of over 20 different mechs, fighting for



As parts of each robot are damaged, their limbs turn different colors. As you can see here, this robot firing bullets at us has a semi-damaged shoulder.



This unfortunate robot lost both of its legs, making it fall to the ground and explode—thus demonstrating one of the more popular tactics used to kill mechs.



The destruction and protection of strategic buildings, even egg-shaped ones, are a big part of the missions that you will have to complete in MechWarrior 21.

the clan of their choice. Players can customize their mechs to the hilt, select which missions they participate in, move up within the ranks of their clan, in addition to laying waste to the mechanized forces of the opposing clan.

So far, MechWarrior 2 unfortunately seems to be falling prey to the force responsible for many failed console-based PC ports: control. Easy-to-remember keyboard commands are compressed into unusual button presses on the Saturn's controller, requiring more adjusting time than necessary. At the same time, the limited control pad is no

substitute for a full-sized computer keyboard, almost forcing Activision to eliminate some of the original game's features to make them fit on an eight-button controller.

Graphically, even at this early stage, the Saturn version of MechWarrior 2 does surpass its PC predecessor. As opposed to the blocky, flat-shaded mechs of old, the Saturn version features texture-mapped and shaded characters and terrain and other environmental factors.

MechWarrior 2 is shaping up to be a promising mech combat game for the Saturn, improving on an already solid PC title.

ig

Broken Helix

Konami's latest
American project
takes Doom to
new levels

Publisher: Konami

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Konami CEC

Release: First Quarter '97



Konami has always been known for solid titles, but nearly every hit they've ever produced was designed and programmed in Japan. In recent months, Konami has expended quite a bit of effort to bolster their American in-house development staff, producing the somewhat disappointing action title, Project Overkill.

Fortunately, it looks like Konami's going to redeem themselves with this title, Broken Helix. Cynics may instantly label it as a Doom-clone, but the game, even at this early stage, promises much more than simple run-and-shoot action. The player controls Jake Burton, a Marine Special Forces explosives expert sent to Groom Lake to defuse a touchy

Broken Helix may still be very early, but already cut scenes are in place, and look fairly impressive. Ultimately though, the gameplay will determine if it's a winner.

situation at "Area 51"—which, incidentally, is where his father worked until his mysterious and untimely death nine years earlier.

As Burton, the player must sneak around the complex, avoiding detection by security cameras by crawling through air ducts and hiding behind furniture. Accompanying him are a unit of elite Marines, who are there to help Burton—or so the player is expected to think. As you can see, the plot is a central point in this game, and it is introduced very well with a rendered FMV sequence. While the rendering isn't the greatest, the voice acting already stands out as superior among its peers.

At this early stage of development, Broken Helix looks like

a solid game in the 3-D action-shooting genre. We're optimistic that the final game will live up to the expectations set by our pre-alpha version.

ig



Broken Helix attempts to offer a more interactive style of play than Doom, with an involving story line and more intuitive play mechanics.

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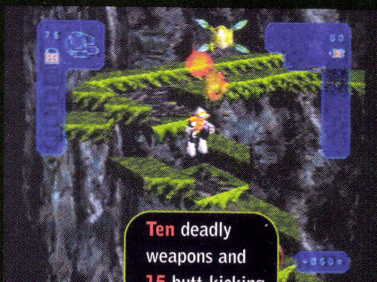
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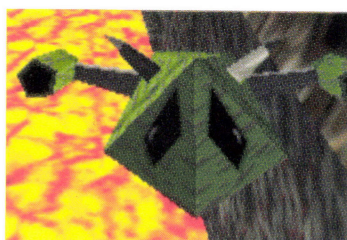


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Wave Race 64 is the latest masterpiece from Miyamoto and friends, and while still only a first-generation N64 game (it's been so long since Mario hit Japan that it seems like a second-generation title), it soars past anything ever done before on 32-Bit systems.

Wave Race 64

Hop on a speedy Kawasaki JetSki and take to the thrashing waves in 64-Bit fashion

Publisher: Nintendo

Platform: Nintendo 64

Format: 64 Megabit Cartridge

Developer: Nintendo

Release: November 4



When Nintendo first introduced the Nintendo 64 machine to the gaming world at the annual Shoshinkai exhibition in Japan last November, one of the first titles announced was a sequel to a popular, although not too well-known 1992 Game Boy "Personal Water Craft" racing title called Wave Race. The new sequel, Wave Race 64, was strangely reminiscent of the classic futuristic Super NES title, F-Zero, but rather than hovercrafts, the racers used small, sleek speedboats to get around the scenic tracks. Overall, it was probably one of the most promising-looking titles

knows what happened to the original game, although many rumors suggest that the basic game engine is instead going to be utilized in the upcoming F-Zero 64. Whether or not that's true is anybody's guess, but it wouldn't be surprising.

Anyway, another four months have come and gone and now Wave Race 64 is complete and ready to ship in time for its Nov. 4 release date. Since E³, Nintendo has obtained an official Kawasaki JetSki license (so now you can legally call them "JetSkis" instead of "Personal Water Crafts"), and the end result is a simply fantastic racing game, easily one of the best ever. It's becoming

(Ryota Hayami, Ayumi Stewart, Miles Jeter and David Mariner) has their own racing style, and their body proportions affect how they play (for example, the thin female Ayumi whips around the tracks with ease, but if she gets hit from behind, she's more than likely going to go careening off of her JetSki because of her small frame). After choosing all of your options, you can save your choices to either the game or the Memory Pack, making Wave Race 64 the first U.S. game to make use of the Memory Pack. You can transfer save data to and from the system data as well, and vice-versa.

After warming up in the Training Mode, where you practice your racing skills and stunt maneuvers in a practice course called Dolphin Park, you race through several Championship Rounds (the number of which depends on what difficulty level you choose—there are over seven Rounds in all), trying to get the first-place title. Racing against the three other racers, the object is to steer around various buoys labeled with L

It's becoming somewhat of a cliché statement nowadays, but Miyamoto and his team have done it again...

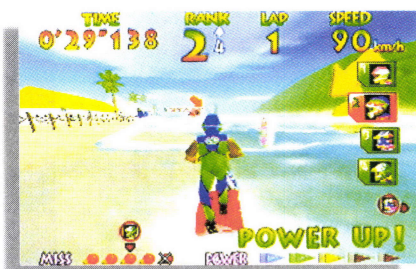
Nintendo showed at the entire exhibition, but alas, after the show ended,

nobody heard another word about the game for a long time.

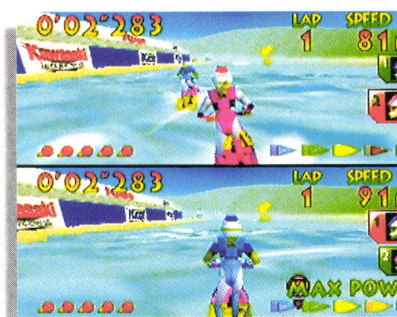
Six months later, at the second annual E³ show in Los Angeles, Nintendo unveiled a totally new, completely revamped version of Wave Race 64 during the official U.S. debut of the N64 system, and the changes from the original game were quite apparent. In addition to some minor design tweaks and totally new course layouts, the small speedboats were mysteriously replaced with JetSkis, not unlike the "Personal Water Crafts" from the Game Boy version of Wave Race. Nobody

somewhat of a cliché statement these days, but it'd be a lie not to say it—Miyamoto and his team have done it again.

When you first start up Wave Race 64, you're given a choice of four distinct modes of gameplay (Championship, Time Attack, Score Attack and Vs. Mode), followed by three difficulty settings (Normal, Hard, and Expert). Championship Mode is the main mode of play in Wave Race 64. Upon selecting your mode of play, you then get to choose from four different characters, each with their own fully customizable machines (you're offered the option to adjust the handling, gear, and grip for each of them). Each of the four characters



In some tracks, the tide will come in, leaving a bare beach (and sometimes other obstacles) to deal with. You can still move over land, but your JetSki struggles and you'll end up losing momentum.



The Two-player split-screen Battle Mode is a lot of fun, and, as stated elsewhere in this review, the lack of any major quality loss in animation (or otherwise) is great.



In one of the rounds, you'll begin at dawn amidst a thick fog and lots of mist. By the third lap in that round however, the fog will be gone and the sun will be out!

You'll get to race at dawn, at dusk, at night, even over ice, and each area is as fun as the next.

and R logos (corresponding to the direction you need to go to successfully get around them) while battling waves of varying strengths and navigating the obstacles throughout the courses. You have a power meter that goes up each time you successfully navigate around a buoy, accumulating until you reach "Max Power." If you miss a buoy, however, your power returns to zero, which (finally) offers a good strategic reason NOT to skip the buoys when racing around the courses. Additionally, it is possible to get Max Power or at least a "Power Up!" right off the starting line if you time your initial thrust correctly. Scoring is similar to games like WipeOut, where your score after each level depends on your position when you cross the finish line (max points for first place, all the way down to just one point for last place).

The Time Attack mode speaks for itself, as you basically race alone on the round of your choice to try to gather the best time possible. The Score Attack mode is a little bit more unique in that you get a certain amount of time to race through stunt rings while trying to pull off as many wild stunt maneuvers as possible. You get points for going through the rings and doing stunts, and the object is to get as many points as possible. Finally, there is an awesome Two-player horizontal

split-screen mode that is just a total blast to play. There's hardly any loss in screen quality, despite the fact that there's twice as much going on, although on some stages you'll see that certain non-essential, although pretty cool background effects had to be sacrificed to keep the main action running smoothly.

As far as the actual gameplay is concerned, there's really nothing negative that can be said about the game. It's really that good. Your racer is controlled by using the N64's central analog joystick, and the sense of realism created from the stick's precision handling is simply magnificent. It truly feels like you're riding on a Kawasaki

JetSki (not like I've ever been on one, but... if I was, then this is how I'd imagine it to be... or something...), and the atmospheric conditions created by the lush scenery and graphics are simply beautiful. You can really feel the strength of the waves when they're choppy, and when the water is calm the response is as smooth as ever. You'll get to race at dawn, at dusk, at night, even over ice, and each area is as fun as the next. If you

practice your techniques, you can do some amazing stunts, like handstanding on the handlebars, or doing complete 360-degree flips while jumping off of ramps. The best way to learn those moves, however, is in the Training Mode.

Musically, Wave Race sounds very good. The soundtracks to

reviewer just wasn't prepared to be as blown away by the game as he was when he finally sat down with the completed version. If this is a sign of things to come (and to think, it's only a first-generation game!), then it'd be extremely difficult not to recommend looking into the purchase of a Nintendo 64



Two of the later rounds involve some serious hazards. One is littered with huge ice areas, and the other takes place at night, with only buoy spotlights to guide you.

the game are basic, but they work, and the sound effects are great. The announcer is the same fellow who did the voice for Rock 'N' Roll Racing for the SNES, and he never manages to get annoying, despite the fact that he just doesn't seem to ever want to shut up.

Overall, Wave Race 64 came across as quite a shock when we finally received the final version. Not that we doubted Miyamoto for a second, but this

Wave Race 64: Then and Now

Since it was first unveiled at last November's Shoshinkai Exhibition in Japan, Wave Race 64 has undergone some major cosmetic changes in addition to a complete engine overhaul. Here's a look at Wave Race 64, then and now.



THEN: The original Wave Race 64 from Shoshinkai looked like F-Zero in a boat. The short video that played was really impressive, but the game was never to be seen in public again.



NOW: The new Wave Race 64 takes place on Kawasaki JetSkis, which offer more maneuverability than any boat ever could. It'd still be cool to someday get to play that old WR64 though...

The atmospheric conditions created by the lush scenery and graphics are simply beautiful.



▲ Sunset Bay takes action during a beautiful sunset (get it? Sunset Bay? Brilliant, I tell you...) where the first semi-tough challenges in the game begin to arise.

sometime over the course of the next year. Granted, there aren't nearly as many titles as can be found on competing systems, but the one thing IG, and surely most gamers, has always treasured more than anything else in a gaming system is the idea of quality over quantity, and apparently, Nintendo realizes this quite well, with their second A+ title in just three games. The future of the N64 is looking really bright...

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Graphics are simply amazing, with great atmosphere.
- + Smooth animation and gorgeous textures.

SOUNDS:

- +/- The music is more than fitting, but it's nothing revolutionary.
- + Great sound effects and a real good announcer.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Remember how F-Zero was when the SNES came out? This is just as great.
- + Now I see why they call it The Fun Machine...

LASTING POWER:

- + With all of the different modes, you just keep coming back for more.
- + Two-player split-screen play is a blast, with hardly any noticeable quality loss.

OVERALL

REVOLUTIONARY

A+

B+

A+

A+

A+

The Wave Race Gallery



For such a beautiful-looking game, it wouldn't have been fair for us not to give you a sneak peek at some more gorgeous screen shots.





Another for the
highlight reel.

Hat trick.

Off the draw.

Make the
nylon scream.

Red light district.

5-hole.

Off the pipe.

Over the shoulder.

Dangle to the
gloveside.

There's no stone
in this one.

Stickside.

Kiss the
water bottle.

Bullet from
the blue line.

One-timer.

Off the skate.

Where Mama keeps
the peanut butter.
(top shelf)

Wrap
around.

WAYNE IS IN THE DETAILS



Wayne puree. Wayne concentrate. Essence du Great One. Call it what you will, this game is 100% pure Gretzky. In 3-D no less. With Wayne's own moves, strategies, and thoughts digitized for future generations. So you can use Wayne's skills plus his brains as you play 3-on-3, 4-on-4, or 5-on-5 against the best in the NHL. It's not just the monster arcade hit coming home, it's the most realistic 3-D hockey game ever. The way Wayne really plays. Fast. Furious. And in 3-D. Amen.

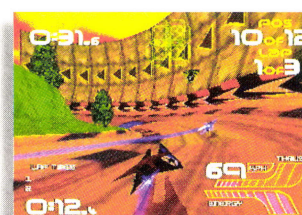


WipeOut XL

Lightning strikes once again for Psygnosis as anti-gravity racing returns

When the Sony PlayStation was released last September, one of the most eagerly anticipated games due to be released was the futuristic hovercraft racing game from Psygnosis called WipeOut. With elements taken and added upon from Nintendo's F-Zero, beautiful graphics and unparalleled smoothness, WipeOut went on to be one of the hottest sellers last holiday season (the Saturn version, released this past June, isn't too shabby either).

Now Psygnosis is back with WipeOut XL (known as WipeOut 2097 in Europe), and game players are once again drooling with



Beautiful graphics complement the astounding gameplay that Psygnosis has perfected in WipeOut XL. The entire package screams quality, and thanks to the Designers Republic, the graphical interface really looks quite cool.

you'll find that WipeOut is quite similar in overall design and execution.

New to WipeOut XL are a variety of options and game-play enhancements that make the sequel a lot more worth its weight in gold than the first WipeOut was. There are four

There are three main Racing Classes (Vector, Venom and Rapier), and at least one hidden one (Phantom) that each offer two totally new tracks, combining for a total of eight altogether. You can race on any of the first six from the outset, but you won't be able to access the later tracks until you've completely mastered the initial batch (by finishing in first place on each track). There are four Racing Teams to choose from (Feisar, AG Systems, Auricom and Qirex), each with its own unique handling skills and vehicle characteristics. Additionally, there is at least one hidden craft that can be uncovered. Fortunately with all these options, you have the ability to save to a memory card or get

Each track is full of vivid textures and intense lighting effects, and the crafts are articulately designed.

anticipation for the latest addition to the WipeOut series.

Set in the year 2097, WipeOut XL is centered around the F5000 Anti-Gravity Racing League, where four teams of racers (not including any hidden teams) from around the globe have come together once again to race for the championship in their anti-gravity machines. For the four or five of you who've never played the original WipeOut (shame!), the basic premise is like a traditional auto racing game, except for the fact that you can use weapons, you can travel at much higher speeds than any car, and you're much more likely to get wrecked than in, say, Sega's Daytona USA or Namco's Ridge Racer. If you've ever played Nintendo's F-Zero,

Race Types from the get-go, with additional bonus Race Types (known as Challenges) that become available after you perform certain feats (like scoring a Gold on all of the available circuits). The four main Race Types are Arcade (the regular one-player game—the amount of opponents depends on the Class you are racing in), Time Trial (a race against the clock to try to beat your best times), Arcade Link (a two-player linked match with computer opponents) and One-on-One (a two-player linked match with no other competitors).



New to XL is the inclusion of checkpoints, which make your lap times a lot more important now.



Thanks to the all-new damage meter, scenes like this are totally possible (and quite frequent if you don't learn to manage your power).



There are quite a few weapons at your disposal in WipeOut XL, from triple-firing Rockets to explosive missiles and mines. The visual effects of each weapon are splendid, as is the explosive damage each weapon can do!

a password to continue later.

Graphically, WipeOut XL is beautiful. Each track is full of vivid textures and intense lighting effects, and even the crafts themselves are articulately designed, with new vapor trails that emit from the back of the



first game too, making for a truly enticing visual experience. Hell, even the game's interface is great, with clean, sleek, quick menus to guide you through the several options screens.

Getting on to the music, this is perhaps the only area in

The music is perhaps the only area in WipeOut XL that could have been improved somewhat from WipeOut.

crafts. The tracks scroll by with incredible smoothness, even on the ultra-fast Phantom Class, and there are very rarely any signs of slowdown or breakup. Additionally, some tracks have realistic-looking weather effects as well, including rain and snow. The weapons are a lot more intense than they were in the

WipeOut XL that could've been improved somewhat. There are several industrial-type techno tracks on the CD, including beats by such popular Euro groups as The Chemical Brothers and The Future Sound of London, and while none of the music is even remotely bad, it just doesn't seem like a huge

improvement from the first game. A lot of the tracks sound good in fact, but the original WipeOut soundtrack did a much better job of utilizing songs that really fit well with this type of high-speed, adrenaline-pumping racing



With scenes like these, it's hard not to appreciate the visual splendor of WOXL. The larger screen (above) is of one of the hidden tracks later in the game. Could it be possible to access those tracks from the start? Hmm...

game. Sound effects, on the other hand, are top-notch, and really help to create the atmospheric feel of the not-too-distant future.

Aesthetics aside, the gameplay is where WipeOut XL truly shines. The control has been fine-tuned to perfection (the E1 version seemed slightly awkward when compared to the first WO, but since then everything has been fixed), and once again the game supports Namco's amazing neGcon controller (slated for release in October). As any racing purist will tell you—you haven't truly played WipeOut until you've played it with a neGcon.

There are various enhancements to the race style alone, including the inclusion of both checkpoints and a damage meter. The checkpoints work like any other racing game; basically you have a certain amount of time to reach each one (to continue the race), and if you don't make it in time, you'll retire from the race. The damage meter is another major similarity to the old F-Zero. Each time you smack into a wall or get hit by an opponent's weapon, you'll lose some energy, and when your energy bar hits zero, your craft explodes.

Fortunately, there is a side path near each track's starting point that you can take to refill your energy bar, and while you'll probably lose a second or two to the clock, it's usually worth it.

The weaponry has been enhanced as well, with an assortment of new weapons and power-ups to add to the fray. In addition to the usual batch of rockets, missiles and mines, there are some pretty nifty new weapons, most notably the Quake Disruptor, which sends a streaming ripple through the track in front of you, sending any visible competitors flying into the air. Another unique addition is the Autopilot, which, when activated, takes your ship around even the toughest of turns at maximum speed with no problem for three full seconds before disengaging. It really adds to the strategy element of WipeOut XL, especially considering the fact that the AI is pretty bright.

All in all, WipeOut XL is a great improvement over its predecessor, with more tracks, more crafts, more strategy and most importantly, more lasting power. The only minor grievance (and it's certainly arguable) is that the music isn't as fitting as it was in the first. Couple that with the fact that, in one way or another, it's been done before (it's not as genre-defining as say, Wave Race 64), and you've got the only two reasons that this game wasn't given an A+ for an overall rating.

ig



While it has nothing to do with these two screens, it had to be said somewhere: Psynopsis, it's time for an N64 version of WipeOut! Go to it!

GRAPHICS:

- + Very nice backgrounds and track textures.
- + Amazing lighting effects and incredibly smooth, high-speed animation.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Industrial/Techno/Rave fans will love the music, but WipeOut's soundtrack was more fit for the game.
- + Great sound effects.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Easily one of the best racing games available...
- + ...and even better if you have a neGcon (talk about free advertising, sheesh!)

LASTING POWER:

- + With at least four Classes, eight Tracks and lots of hidden options (and two-player linkability), you won't be getting bored any time soon...

OVERALL

HIGHLY
RECOMMENDED

A

▶ Street Fighter Alpha 2 marks the return of two old friends. Back from a brief absence are Dhalsim, the human rubber band (that can have its advantages you know) and Zangief, the Russian wrestler.

Street Fighter Alpha 2

Capcom moves another step forward in their quest to avoid the number "3"

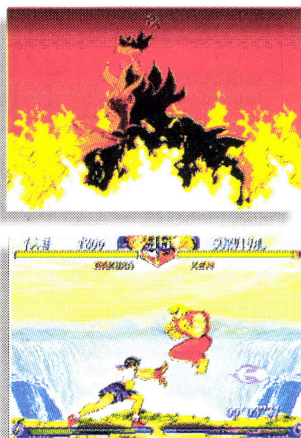
Publisher: Capcom

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Capcom

Release: Now Available

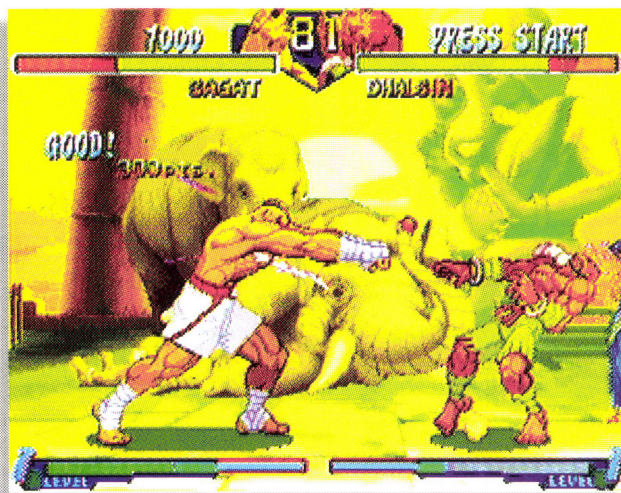


The new Survival Mode allows you to fight your way through as many opponents as possible with only one lifebar. Each victory will earn you back a little energy for the following fight.

Last month, we looked at the PlayStation version of Street Fighter Alpha 2, a game which, although a very faithful arcade port, was lacking many minor details—enough to cause the nitpickers to notice, but not enough to bother most people. Fortunately for Sega fans, just as the Saturn version of Street Fighter Alpha is arguably better than the PS version (mainly because of the shorter load times), Street Fighter Alpha 2 is once again superior on the Sega platform, although the differences are not as subtle as they were in the original game.

The most dramatic differences between the two are the new modes and characters added to the Saturn version. While the PlayStation port was faithful to the Japanese SF Zero 2, the Saturn version appears to have a blend of features from the U.S. SFA2 as well as the recently released Japanese Street Fighter Zero 2 Alpha. Added to the Sega version are "Evil" Ryu (who is simply Ryu with air-juggling special moves, a teleport and Akuma's Raging Demon SC), Champion Edition-era Zangief, Dhalsim and Super Akuma, who can now throw two air fireballs, as if he wasn't powerful enough already. Also, from the SFZ2A arcade game comes the Survival Mode, where you pick a character and fight through numerous computer opponents on one lifebar.

Graphically, the Saturn version restores many of the background and character animations that were missing in the PlayStation version. For example, Strider once again tosses up his teddy bear when a Super



▶ New to Street Fighter Alpha Not 3 (err, that's Street Fighter Alpha 2, sorry) are timed "Custom Combo" attacks that allow you to unleash a flurry of moves with blinding speed. Hey, look! The shadows aren't blue! Oh no!

Combo is performed, and you can see each character's reflection in Gen's stage. If you're a real nitpicker, you'll miss the steam in Zangief's stage, as well as some animation in Dhalsim's stage. The arcade intro is also fully reproduced at 60 fps, as opposed to the PlayStation's weak 30-fps FMV intro.

The Saturn version has some features from Japan's Street Fighter Zero 2 Alpha.

The only place where it could be argued that the Saturn version falls short is in its sound. The music is identical to the PS version, but the sounds appear to have been compromised in order to fit the extra animation into memory. You won't go deaf because of it, though. It's just a minor point.

Loading time is similar to the PS, with between-match times of around six to seven seconds. The Saturn version feels slightly more polished, however, due to the addition of a black-and-white SFA2 logo, instead of the black screen of the PS version.

Overall, the numerous small

additions make the Saturn SFA2 the one to get for those who have both systems. To be fair, though, PS owners will probably be quite satisfied with their version, and it's hard to believe that anyone would buy a Saturn just for the extra features.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + For the most part, just like the arcade.
- Not quite arcade-perfect, but good enough for 99.99 percent of all gamers.

SOUNDS:

- + Same arranged tunes as the PlayStation version.
- Voices are not as clear as they are on the PS.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Same great gameplay, but even more characters.
- Did we really need an even more powerful version of Akuma?

LASTING POWER:

- + The new Survival Mode and the hidden characters add life to the game. Plus, it's a two-player game, adding much replay value.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A-

B

A

A

A-

Fig. 1: Electric chair

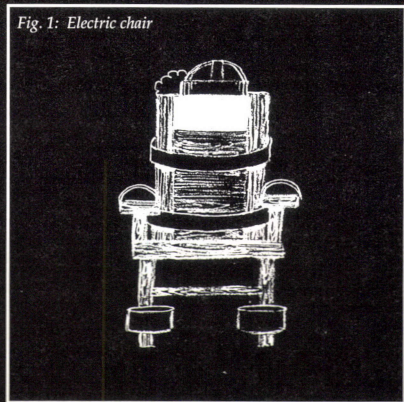


Fig. 2: Gallows

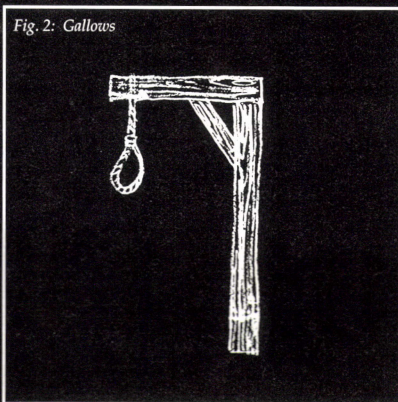


Fig. 3: Guillotine



Where's the sport in that?

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▶ Just about everything on the screen is destructible in Soviet Strike, and while it may seem like a childish or petty fetish, it's one of the things that makes this title so entertaining. Die! Die!

Soviet Strike

Electronic Arts brings its whirly birds of destruction to the 32-Bit Battlefield

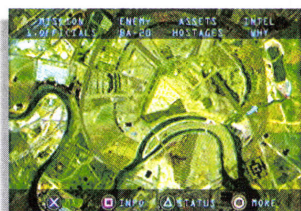
Publisher: Electronic Arts

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Electronic Arts

Release: November



▶ There's nothing better than slamming a column of tanks from their rear (top). The intelligence map shows you where you and just about everything else is (above).

Desert Strike helped revolutionize the game industry by inventing a different genre of shooter in addition to making it work in a graphically unique perspective.

Not only did the Strike series of games provide a nice staple of action, but they also practically forced the player to devise a game plan of sorts. This planning would consist of figuring out which targets to take out first and what the best avenue of attack would be while still considering the budget of resources allotted for his assault, such as fuel, weapons and armor. Soviet Strike for the PlayStation is no different,

sporting spectacular graphics to complement this proven gameplay formula.

Soviet Strike may sound like an odd name, given that the Cold War has been over for years, but actually, many of the missions make a good deal of

Different tasks range from rescuing a secret agent to moving a nuclear core and protecting it from attack.

sense. The source of conflict in the game involves warring factions within the Soviet Union fighting over the remnants of the weakened Soviet Union's army. Missions take place in areas within and surrounding Russia in locations ranging from the Black Sea to the Kremlin.

Each level is patched together to create an encompassing story line through the



▶ As a general rule, it's more fun to destroy the Soviet Navy than it is to blow away their Army, mostly because boats sink, tanks don't—unless they're in quicksand.

use of fast-paced full-motion video segments that describe the combat situation. Additionally, short video sequences are displayed during gameplay which give you information about your next objective or simply add another story element to the game.

The campaigns are incredibly long, with each one containing a huge amount of individual objectives to complete. The fourth campaign alone had nine different tasks ranging from rescuing a secret agent to moving a nuclear core and protecting it from enemy attackers. The missions are quite a chore to

its status of completion.

Graphically, Strike has a few interesting features. The various landscapes that adorn the game are all photo-realistic digitized terrain. On top of these intricate backgrounds are polygon buildings and 3-D vehicles based on various types of weapons and artillery. Other less-threatening objects include churches, and other buildings just waiting for your missiles to shatter them into polygonal pieces.

On balance, Soviet Strike doesn't take too many risks, staying true to the same gameplay that this series of titles has always possessed. Expect to see the identical-looking Saturn version soon as well.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Uses satellite photos for the ground terrain for a truly realistic feel.
- + Nice 3-D models of vehicles and buildings.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Music changes depending on what happens on screen, but the tunes themselves aren't great.

GAMEPLAY:

- + A more-than-worthy sequel to the Strike series of games. Fans won't be disappointed.
- +/- Some of the missions are very difficult.

LASTING POWER:

- + Plenty of long and challenging campaigns will keep players satisfied for a while.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

B

B-

B+

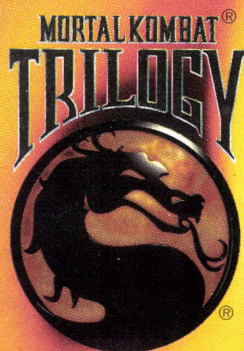
B+

B+

Twenty-six have been given life, and
twenty-six will take it away.

26 characters. 29 play levels. Playable bosses from the past.

It's not Mortal Kombat, it's all previous arcade MK's crammed into one.



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MIDWAY

Perfect Weapon is the perfect answer for gamers who are interested not only in adventure-style games like Resident Evil or Alone in the Dark, but fighting games like Tekken as well.



Perfect Weapon

ASC's new adventure mixes elements from Tekken and Resident Evil

Publisher: ASC Games

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Gray Matter

Release: Now Available



Perfect Weapon sports some amazing graphics, with intensely lifelike backgrounds and textures, and smooth character animation.

If you look at most video games produced today, you'll find that most of the time it's easy to pigeonhole them into a few categories. But what would you call Perfect Weapon? It's an adventure game, much in the vein of Resident Evil or Alone in the Dark...but it's also got lots of fighting-game elements, borrowing from both Tekken and Final Fight. An intriguing blend, to be sure, but does it succeed as a game? The answer to that is "Partially." Although the game has lots of interesting things to see and do, it can often be far too frustrating to be enjoyable.

Perfect Weapon puts the player in the boots of Blake

Although there are lots of things to see and do, it can often be far too frustrating to be enjoyable.

Hunter, world champion martial artist and all-around Marine tough guy. After winning Earth's championship, Blake is abducted by aliens, and shanghaied to an ice moon, the first of many in Blake's quest to determine the aliens' motives and to regain his lost freedom.

The visuals in Perfect Weapon are quite nice, with lavishly rendered backdrops and realtime polygon characters that don't look like they've been pasted over them. The camera will even zoom in and out a bit, to help create the illusion that the backdrops aren't static. However, there is one annoying problem with the backgrounds: The

camera angles they have chosen, although very dramatic, are often useless in terms of gameplay and sometimes cause undue frustration when your character is suddenly small enough on the screen that his heading is no longer obvious. To the game's credit, though, a map in the corner of the screen does help to determine where Blake can and cannot go. Thankfully, Blake isn't stupid enough to walk off cliffs and die whenever the player inadvertently tries to nudge him in the wrong direction.

The music, generated by the Sony PCM sound chip, is very impressive, and really helps to build the atmosphere of the game. The sound effects, although not exactly ambitious, do serve their purpose, and help to anticipate what's ahead.

The control, however, is where Perfect Weapon could use a bit of improvement. The controls are on the sluggish side, which usually means death when fighting more than a few opponents. You'll probably find yourself using repetitive patterns to defeat most of your foes, and sometimes it's unclear that you're doing what you're supposed to be doing when a seemingly endless stream of bad guys materialize to kick your butt. By the same token, mission goals are seldom clearly explained—Blake rarely gets any audio cues to help him on his quest, and consequently the game feels more like constant trial and error. Fortunately, you can save your progress to the Memory Card, which helps to alleviate the problem.

Overall, though, the annoyance of the control system and



With ever-changing cameras, it can become difficult to control your character sometimes during battle.

the unclear objectives serve to frustrate more than they entertain. But that's not to say that Perfect Weapon fails miserably; what's there is enjoyable, but you'll probably be tempted more than once to throw your controller at the screen.

GRAPHICS:

- + Nicely rendered backdrops and smooth polygon characters.
- Camera angles are sometimes confusing.

SOUNDS:

- + Fantastic PCM-based music sets the mood.
- Sound effects are strictly average.

GAMEPLAY:

- + An interesting blend of gameplay styles...
- ...but sluggish control makes it hard to play.

LASTING POWER:

- + A nice, long, difficult quest (for a changel!)
- You probably won't want to play it again after you finish it the first time.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

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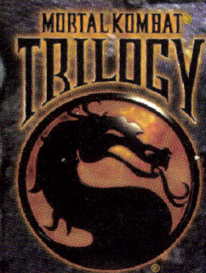
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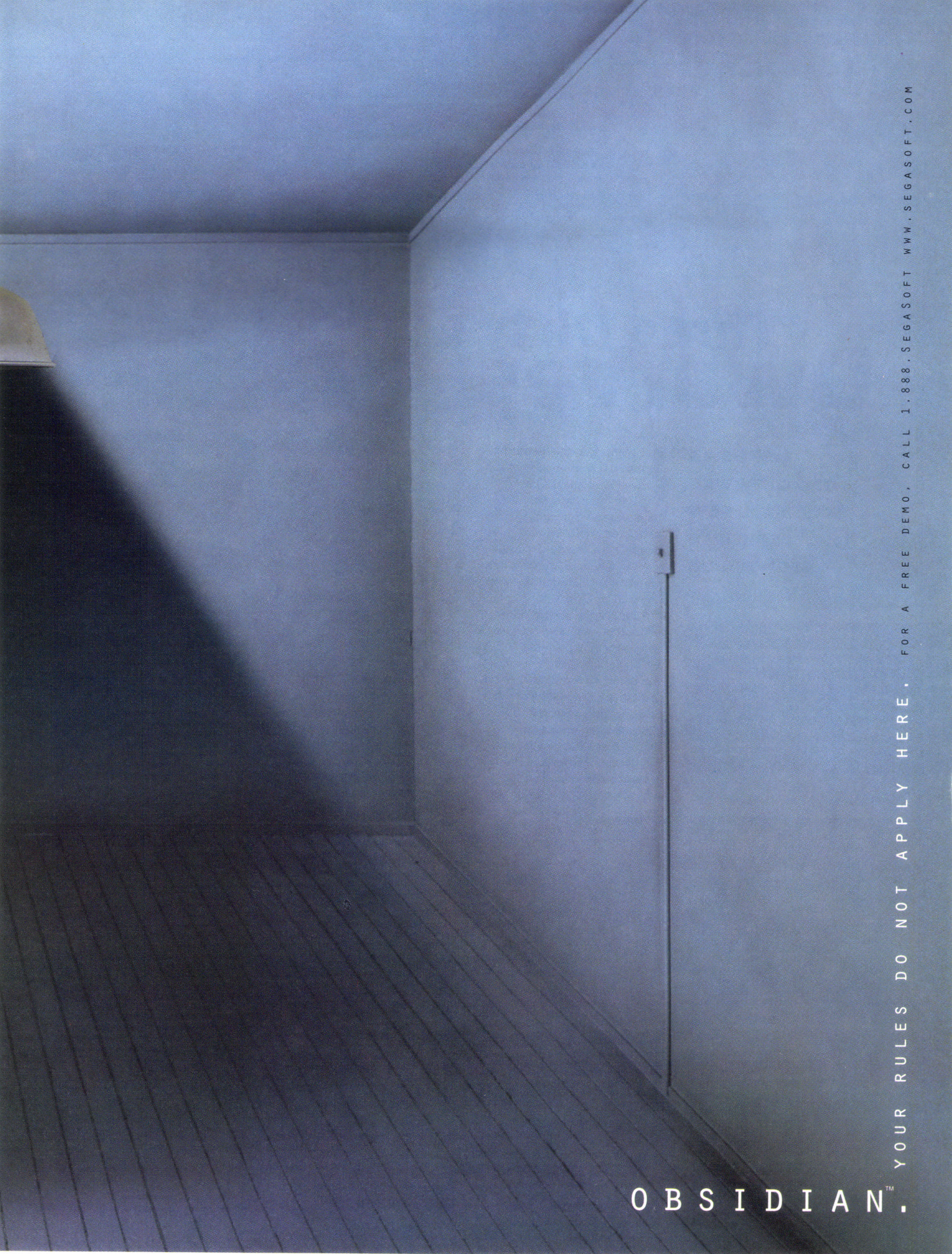
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▶ SegaSoft's *Three Dirty Dwarves* is packed with hilarious animation and tons of hand-drawn artwork. Each of the game's bosses is refreshingly unique, offering gamers a nice change of pace.

Three Dirty Dwarves

Get down and dirty with SegaSoft's new Final Fight-style beat-'em-up

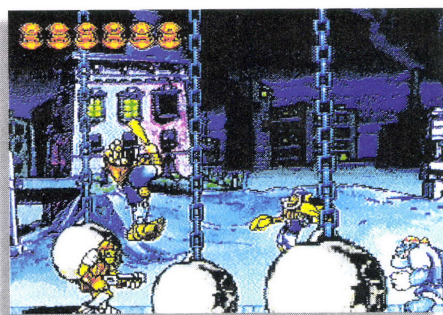
Publisher: SegaSoft

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Appaloosa Interactive

Release: Now Available



The intro to *Three Dirty Dwarves* is extremely long, and is 100 percent full-screen cartoon-style animation explaining the story of the game.

It seems like only yesterday that a few of us seemed to be in agreement that SegaSoft's single greatest asset was to be the babe from the Sacred Pools. Yet, only a few months have passed since, and now the final touches have been put into their first action game, *Three Dirty Dwarves*.

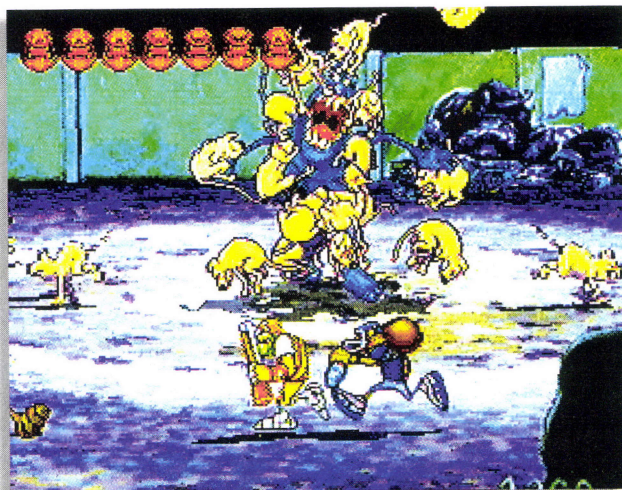
After the game was loaded, a full-motion video sequence was being reluctantly awaited. Would this be yet another demonstration of just how grainy FMV can get? Maybe it would be another cold and lifeless video of the plastic-looking prerendered images that U.S. companies had become known for?

Maybe not. What began instead was a sequence of hand-drawn animation—in short, “cartoons.” It seems that after all this time, someone has finally figured out how to do something cool with all that CD storage. It's only a shame that these

It's a shame that these animators are stuck doing Saturn games instead of Saturday-morning cartoons.

animators are stuck doing Saturn games instead of Saturday-morning cartoons.

The cartoon tells the story of four young RPGers who have somehow wound up playing a game inside a military compound. When something goes awry, a dimensional portal is opened and the kids' characters



get transported into the real world with an army of orcs following close behind.

When the dwarves land, they find themselves inside a shop where an arsenal of sporting goods are soon found. The game then begins with the player controlling all three characters, taking an influence from *Lost Vikings* in the ability to switch between them with the controller's shift keys. Gameplay is reminiscent of games like *Final Fight*, where your character(s) go up against infinite swarms of bad guys and strangely unique boss characters in your typical side-scrolling environment.

Each of the three characters has a different weapon and a unique special attack. One is armed with a mighty Doom-style shotgun that comes complete with unlimited ammo

powerful projectile weapon.

Overall, the struggle for survival is a fun one and even in its most frustrating moments, the game delivers in terms of good, challenging gameplay. It's just nice to know that there's at least a couple of companies left that are willing to call a time-out on the 3-D craze and make a game worth playing.

GRAPHICS:

- + Excellent sprite-based character and enemy animation.
- Nothing much revolutionary though.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Fitting music, although it's become fairly generic in games of this type.
- + Satisfying sound effects for weapons and hits.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Overall control is solid... +/- ...but it takes getting used to, giving it a rewarding learning curve.
- Awkward button layout and annoying load times.

LASTING POWER:

- + The difficulty is fairly high and there's a two-player option.
- Not much in the way of depth or exploration.

OVERALL

B+
RECOMMENDED



Scene from Final Fantasy VII

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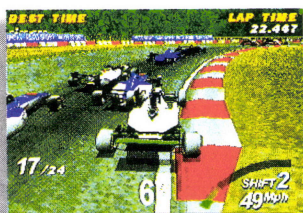
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Formula 1

Psygnosis' F1 formulates an exciting combo of realism and arcade action

Publisher: Sony Psygnosis

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Bizarre Creations

Release: Now Available



Wet-weather racing is convincing, as you'll notice the spray shooting off the tires and undersides of the cars. When on dry pavement, tire spins are natural.

Formula 1's development has been somewhat of a mystery. Previewed in the May issue of IG, this sleek Psygnosis racer looked very promising, and seemed poised to launch onto store shelves within a scant month or two. Well, suffice it to say, it's been a longer wait than anticipated, and while Bizarre Creations has developed for Psygnosis a racing game that delivers on many fronts, it isn't quite as stunning as some might have hoped.

From the beginning, Bizarre Creations made the creation of a detailed Formula 1 circuit as one of their main objectives. Tremendous attention to detail is clearly evident in almost all areas of the game, particularly the cars and tracks. Seventeen European tracks were created from the original survey maps. Each of these tracks is made of upward of 90,000 polygons, and together are an excellent sampling of what is available around the world. Some of the better-known tracks include Silverstone (England), Hockenheim (Germany), Monaco and Adelaide (Australia). Formula 1 offers two main modes of play. In the Grand Prix Mode players pick from 13 teams and 35 real drivers from the 1995 Formula 1 season. Each driver has his or her own individual driving characteristics and distinctively different-looking F1 vehicles. These characteristics and superb artificial intelligence that make up each driver's person are some of the high points of the game. During a race, the smarter drivers will try to block your attempts at passing them, while managing their cars' paths



efficiently by staying in the slipstream or taking curves in the best possible manner when it counts. Formula 1's Grand Prix Mode offers additional features for serious racing fans who would sacrifice their social lives to complete the 1995 F1 season. This mode offers several prerace options that include team and car selection, vehicle setup, difficulty, announcer selection, race music, weather and length of race.

GP Mode is for racing fans who would sacrifice their social lives to complete the 1995 F1 season.

Luckily, one of the best options consists of the choice to switch the announcer off. Although he sounds great announcing the race, constantly listing what place each car is in by driver name, his voice gets a bit annoying after a few races.



► Several real-life drivers are available, complete with their lovely mug shot and car photo.



► Opponent strength can be adjusted from easy to hard as players get more competent in their abilities.

Arcade Mode is every bit as exciting as Grand Prix Mode, only without the time-consuming prerace setup. Steering and brake assist can be toggled on, allowing players to hit the corners at high speeds without worrying about a costly spinout. Running off the course onto the grass won't result in a frustrating "donut festival" as is the case when in Grand Prix Mode.

For the most part, Formula 1 delivers graphically. The vehicles are arguably the most aesthetically important portion of the title. If this game's rating was based solely on the appearance of the cars, F1 would get an exceptional rating. In keeping with the meticulous detail theme, the cars are modeled from pictures provided by the actual racing teams. Each car has a different body style and color combination. Once the cars are on the track, their 3-D models move and look as good as any other racing game currently on the market.

The environmental conditions on the track also deserve some mention. Racing in F1's wet tracks markedly improves the graphics of the game with transparent mist sprays spewing from



Off-roading in the Grand Prix Mode usually results in radical spins until you get back on track.

the car's rear tires, complete with multiple lighting effects emanating from the rear warning lights. In addition, the rest of the background is shrouded in a visibility-limiting gray fog.

If only as much attention was paid to the construction of the track itself the whole package would be outstanding. The biggest blemish is that it suffers from the same polygon glitching problem that plagued Ridge Racer. Annoyingly, blue lines will sporadically appear on the track, sometimes looking like pools of water, especially when playing in the first-person Camera Mode. While this is not much of a hindrance, it can cause vision problems when using the first-person view. It's a little inexcusable, considering that this problem has been licked by most other games since Ridge Racer, a first-generation game. Other minor negatives in the game include the absence of an on-screen map which shows players where they are on the track. It's not an essential element to a game, but it's nice to have to help gauge your progress. Finally, even when full damage is on, the car wrecks are not that spectacular. Going airborne, cartwheeling down the track in a ball of fire is not an option in the game. Of course, racing games are not made to showcase crashes, but we all know that part of the fun of the games is to see the result of our fatal mistakes on the track. It makes losing tolerable, or at the very least, spectacular.

On an audible level, F1 excels. The main coup is that

the music consists of great tunes from the likes of Joe Satriani and Steve Vai, presented in Dolby Surround Sound. The sounds are fine, but nothing spectacular. Expectations are not high for a racing game as there is only so much you can do with engine noises and screeching tires.

All in all, F1 is a very good racer, especially when you consider that it plays well as both an action game and a simulation—something several racing titles have attempted and failed. Other than some minor flaws, F1 has turned out to be one of the best racing sims ever.

ig



All of the six camera angles are functional for use during a race with the exception of the front-to-back camera.

GRAPHICS:

- +/- The amount of pop-up is minimal while frame rate is at a fast 30 fps.
- Blue lines appear often on the oncoming track.

SOUNDS:

- + Engine sound is authentic but can get a bit annoying with prolonged play.
- +/- The witty English announcer—love him or hate him, can luckily be toggled on or off.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Truly realistic-feeling Formula 1-style racing.
- No on-screen course layouts and hardly impressive wrecks.

LASTING POWER:

- + Great for both arcade and sim-style racing fans.
- + Two-player link option is available.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED



Notice the sparse background. Bizarre purposely kept the extraneous elements out of the mix to keep the game moving fast.

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▶ Fighting Vipers, Sega's little-seen arcade title from 1995, incorporates many of the play mechanics of Virtua Fighter and VF2, but adds to them by having the fighters battle in enclosed arenas.

Fighting Vipers

AM2's latest arcade port comes to the Saturn with many enhancements

Publisher: Sega of America

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega AM2

Release: Now Available



The airplane that zooms overhead in the arcade game is the only noticeable missing part of the home Fighting Vipers (top). The silver superstar himself, Japan's Pepsiman, is only in the Japanese version of the game, for various licensing reasons (above).

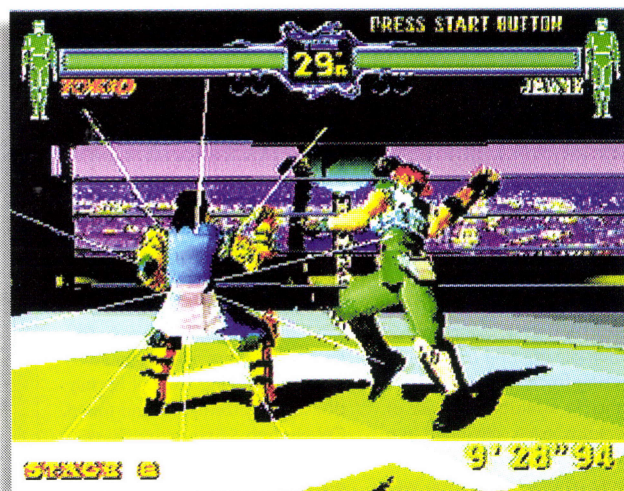
Although Virtua Fighter 2 was a smash hit in Japan, in the U.S., the game never achieved the mass-market success that it could have. It seems reasonable that Sega's AM2 division realized this, and produced Fighting Vipers as an attempt to appeal to the alienated gamer who doesn't want to learn 10-hit combo strings or esoteric moves, much the way Capcom's Street Fighter Alpha series has "dumbed down" the original SF2 heritage.

The characters in FV are generally, well, rather freaky. All of the characters wear armor, which can be broken, increasing their vulnerability. The characters range from the somewhat normal Akira-clone Bahn, to the "costume play" girl Candy, who wears an...interesting...outfit.

The characters are light-sourced and Gouraud shaded, effects which weren't present in the arcade game.

Once you get over the strange characters (seemingly a trend in 3-D fighting games), you'll notice the simplified control scheme. While the countermoves in VF2 were fairly difficult to pull off, the analogous counters in FV are ridiculously easy to do (back+punch or kick) although a missed counter has a lengthy recovery time, which discourages gratuitous overuse.

FV's main claim to fame is the enclosed ring. Those annoyed by VF's ringouts will be happy to know that ringouts are nearly impossible now that there are walls on each side of the area...at least, they'll be happy until an experienced



▶ When finishing off an opponent with a special move, it's possible to send him or her (or it, for that matter) careening through the wall.

player traps them in a corner and beats the stuffing out of them. The game encourages juggling to the point where most characters have an upper-cut or similar move that will vault their opponent 20 feet into the air, where they can be pummeled senselessly, or, with some characters, intercepted in the air and air-thrown.

Graphically, FV is fairly

through the game. Additionally, there are several hidden characters, including Kumachan, a large bear statue, and, only in the Japanese version of the game, Pepsiman. (The U.S. version has had all Pepsi references removed from the game.) There's also a nice practice mode, as well as the usual team battle and versus modes.

Although FV lacks the long-term depth of VF2, it stands up well compared to nearly every other fighting game out there. As such, this game is certainly worth a look for any Saturn owner looking for a brutal and fun fighting experience.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Light sourcing and Gouraud shading are rather impressive.
- Some clipping and slowdown when things heat up.

SOUNDS:

- + Music and sound effects are above average.
- The voices seem to be at a low sample rate.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Bashing your friends through a concrete wall is tons of fun!
- Doesn't have the long-term depth of VF2.

LASTING POWER:

- + Lots of options, and hidden characters...
- ...although not as many as Tekken 2 or SFA2.

OVERALL

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

A-

- ☆ 8 racy roadsters.
- ☆ 10 topsy-turvy tracks.
- ☆ Looney weapons to lob.

- ★ Hidden bonus levels.
- ★ Link cable compatible.
- ★ Racing fun for everyone!



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Williams brings the off-rumored, but never found art of the "Brutality" into the mix of action in *Mortal Kombat Trilogy*. The N64 version's best asset is that there are no loading times whatsoever.

Mortal Kombat Trilogy

The bloodbath returns as Williams brings the best MK yet to the N64

Publisher: Williams

Platform: Nintendo 64

Format: 96 Megabit Cartridge

Developer: Midway

Release: November



Mortal Kombat Trilogy offers all of the backgrounds from each *Mortal Kombat* game, not to mention some new ones and a host of hidden surprises.

Mortal Kombat Trilogy is a monstrous 96 Megabit cartridge that melds all three MK titles into one large game. It includes all of the characters, fatalities, combos and—more importantly—the blood that gamers have come to love.

Fans of the series will immediately recognize the game's slew of 26 new and old characters. Baraka makes the cut, not seen since MK2, as well as the well-known bosses Motaro and Shao Kahn. Kombatants that had previously been hidden or selectable only through a special code can be chosen on the main character select screen. Rain, Noob Saibot, Smoke and

Johnny Cage is back, although he's suspiciously missing the "low blow" attack that he is famous for.

Jade are all in the roster of characters. Even Johnny Cage is back, although he's suspiciously missing the "low blow" attack that he's famous for. MK hasn't lost its signature feature of hidden characters with both Human Smoke and Kahmeleon waiting to be found.

Adding even more to the game are two-on-two, three-on-three (exclusive to the N64 version), and eight-player kombat tournament play. The two-on-two and three-on-three modes are set up much like an endurance match. Both players go through their roster of two or three



characters before the round is officially over. The eight-player tournament mode sets that amount of fighters against each other until only one is left.

Control of your characters is very tight, as combos and special moves are pulled off with ease. New to the series in MK Trilogy is the Aggressor meter which, when full, increases the amount of damage inflicted on your opponent. For less-experienced gamers, there is an "auto-kombo" feature which will make it easier for novices to have a fighting chance against experts.

The area where MK Trilogy does suffer is the character animation, which contains slightly



New to MK Trilogy is the powerful Aggressor meter, which allows you to attack with enhanced strength once the meter fills up to its maximum level.

the past in any of its three (four if you count UMK3) incarnations will thoroughly enjoy playing *Mortal Kombat Trilogy*, the Nintendo 64's first traditional fighting game.

ig

GRAPHICS:

- + Clean, digitized characters and detailed backgrounds.
- Slightly slower frame rate than the arcade version.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Music from the arcade is nice, but not particularly memorable.
- + Good sound effects, and lots of digitized speech.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Aggressor mode and new options add to the mix.
- Not a high learning curve; once you know the moves, you can kick butt easily.

LASTING POWER:

- + Several multiplayer modes make long-lasting play a possibility.
- After you've seen all the fatalities, you may begin to get bored with it.

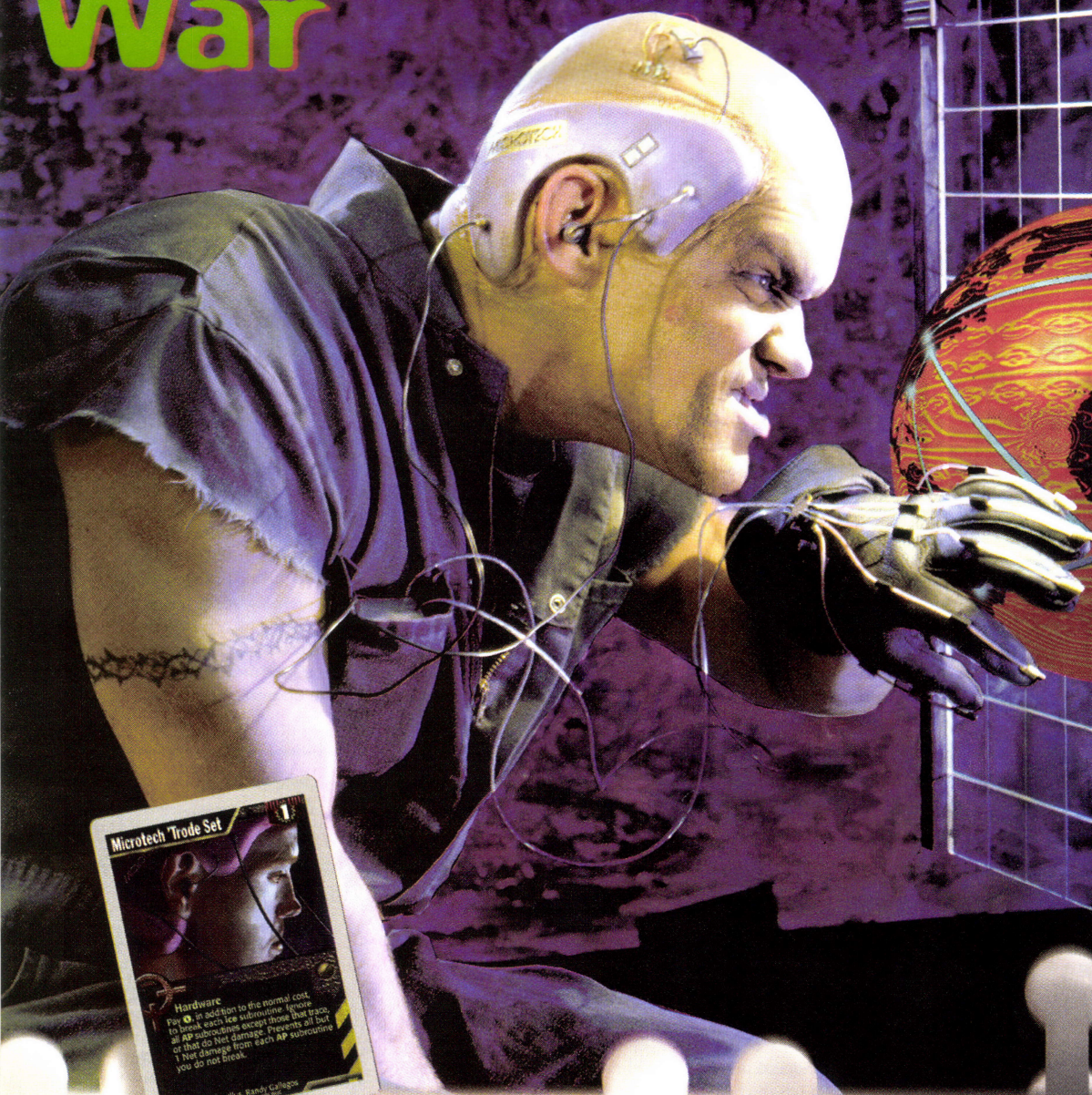
OVERALL

RECOMMENDED



Exclusive to the N64 version of MK Trilogy is a three-on-three Kombat mode where each player chooses three characters and then fights (one at a time) until one of the teams is out of fighters.

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Crystal Dynamics' 3D Baseball looks nice, but that's where the high marks stop. The gameplay brings up many question marks, and there is a severe lack of baseball licenses and ballparks.

3D Baseball

Crystal Dynamics' first baseball game barely makes it into the big leagues

Publisher: Crystal Dynamics

Platform: Sega Saturn

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release: Now Available



The screen layout and menus look nice, but what's on them is where the problem lies. Notice the lack of ballparks, and the absence of team names.

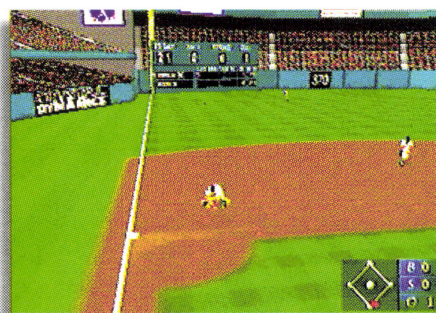
To say that this title arrived a bit late would be a major understatement. Over a year ago, Crystal Dynamics tantalized baseball fans with early screenshots and video of rendered graphics unlike anything anyone had seen before.

Surprisingly, this 3-D title has arrived on the Saturn first, a machine not known for its polygon-pushing ability. Despite those general (and sometimes incorrect) preconceptions of the Saturn, Crystal Dynamics has delivered a graphically competent title, although it doesn't look nearly as good as those early screenshots would have had you believe.

Although 3D Baseball contains all of the real players, there are no real team logos or names.

Credit Crystal Dynamics for creating some of the nicest polygonal characters in 32-Bit sports. They are some of the best textured, rendered and motion-captured baseball players we've seen so far. However, other people in the office, and passers-by are quick to point out that the players use an odd-looking bat that looks more like a light-colored two-by-four. For the most part, the graphics are still a definite positive.

Still, while pretty graphics are one thing—games are built upon gameplay. Though everything looks and animates fine, the gameplay has a definite stiffness to it. In addition to



There are a variety of camera angles to view the action from. Only a few of them are useable, though.

problematic control, there aren't many choices in the amount of pitching styles available, making this more of an arcade-style game that doesn't play as well as an arcade game should. Lack of pitching also hurts the game as a simulation, though there are a reasonable amount of coaching options such as the positioning of fielders and of course, substitution of players. Playing a full season is also an option.

The most obvious weaknesses in this title lie with the licensing, or better put—lack thereof. Although 3D Baseball contains all of the real players and their mug shots, there are no real team logos or names. In this day and age of sports gaming, it is no longer a luxury to



The entire environment is 3-D rendered, including some very competent stadium modeling.

have a fully licensed game, it is a necessity. Even worse, there are only four different ballparks that have fake names like "Crystal Yards" and "Willis Field." It wouldn't be a big deal if 3D Baseball had the ballparks' likenesses without

the name; instead it has neither. 3D Baseball is a title that looks pretty, but lacks all of the little things that make a baseball game an overall success.

ig

GRAPHICS:

+/- Great polygonal baseball players, but what's the deal with those bats?

SOUNDS:

+/- Van Earl Wright sounds good as an announcer, but his style suits basketball better than baseball.

GAMEPLAY:

- The gameplay has an unmistakable stiffness to it.
- Doesn't play exceptionally well as an arcade game, or as a simulation.

LASTING POWER:

- Full-season mode is available, but who wants to play that many games of this?
- + Sports games, even average ones, tend to have a long shelf life.

OVERALL

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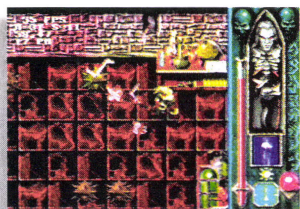
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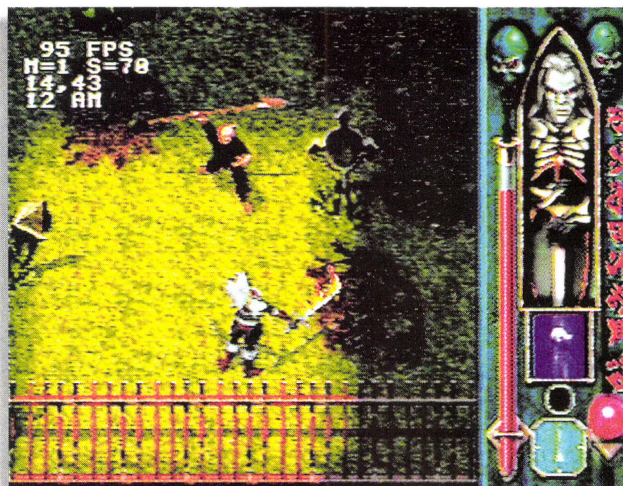
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▲ Legacy of Kain utilizes a top-down view, similar to the renowned classic, The Legend of Zelda.



Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain

Crystal Dynamics' long-awaited action-RPG ends up falling way short of perfection

Publisher: Activision

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Crystal Dynamics

Release: November

While their Saturn counterparts have been enjoying great games like Legend of Oasis and Dark Savior, action-RPG-loving PlayStation owners could only sit and wait, staring at screen shots of Legacy of Kain, hoping. As Kain enters the final stages of production, we're afraid to say that the wait for a great next-generation action-RPG on the PlayStation must continue. Although certain elements of LoK are well-presented and visually pleasing, they are ultimately undermined by poor control, shallow play and a slew of technical nuances.

The basic gist of your quest

Even if they are not as ambitious as the plot, the visuals in Kain are likewise well done. The perspective is top-down, with all the graphics drawn in a detailed and realistic style. The FMV looks great, and the voice acting, which there is tons of, is of refreshingly high quality.

The basic gameplay is just that—basic, and painfully so. Besides the notable exception of the battle axes, all the other weapons have just one kind of attack. Control of your character is stiff and awkward, but gameplay is varied a bit by the four different forms that Kain can later transform into (Wolf, Bat, Mist and Pseudo-human). Sadly, none of these prove very useful.

Audio in LoK is a mixed bag. The CD music sounds great—haunting and often truly spooky, it subtly adds to the mood of the game, although surely it doesn't help the load times any. Sound effects, on the other hand, would be acceptable, except for how few there are and how overused they become.

Overall, it's a pity that much of Kain's potential, as seen in the story line, some of the graphics and in the variety of items and spells, is so hindered by technical problems—slowdown, load times and a clumsy interface. That being said, only the truly desperate RPG fan could find Legacy of Kain enjoyable.

ig



LoK's cinemas are of high-quality; doesn't it make you thirsty? (top). Graphics are nice, but screen shots can't portray any lack of animation or hideous slowdown (above).

The dungeons in Kain are one of its problems; they soon prove dull and repetitive to the point of annoyance.

is standard RPG fare—go from dungeon to dungeon, killing the bosses and gaining new abilities. The dungeons in Kain are one of its fundamental problems; they may be long and plentiful, but their length soon proves dull and repetitive to the point of annoyance. Making your way through a dungeon is almost always a matter of flipping a switch, to open a door, to go to the next room, to flip a switch, to open a door, to flip...well, you get the idea—not exactly what you'd call balanced. The added twist of being an evil vampire definitely has its moments, though—like sucking the blood out of helpless human prisoners chained every so often to the dungeon walls to replenish your health. Kain definitely gets high marks for style.

Further compounding these playability problems is the control interface—you can equip only one item or spell at any one time, and changing between them is an unnecessarily painful process. Switching armor or weapons is just as tedious—because of all the loading. And often you forget where you were or what you were doing beforehand in the actual game. Even though Kain has a nice variety of weaponry and items, choosing from them is such a hassle you'll probably end up only doing it when truly necessary. Additionally, there's a ton of slowdown to compliment the annoying load times. It's hard to ever really get into Kain when it seems you are always either waiting for something to load or noticing the game bog down.

GRAPHICS:

- + Great use of light-sourcing effects.
- + Good character animation and FMV sequences.

SOUNDS:

- + Lots of voice and very mood-fitting music.
- Little variety in the average-at-best sound effects.

GAMEPLAY:

- Awkward character movement and limited play control.
- Completely frustrating menu interface.

LASTING POWER:

- A huge, lengthy quest... but far too repetitive to maintain any kind of significant interest.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

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NASCAR Racing

NASCAR falls deeper into the pack as it nears the finish line

Publisher: Sierra

Platform: Sony PlayStation®

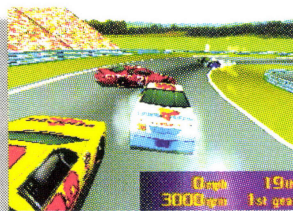
Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Papyrus

Release: Now Available

To be fair, NASCAR Racing for the PlayStation is a competent port, keeping most, if not all the options and tracks that were available in the highly successful racing simulation released two years ago for the PC. In the PS version, as was the case in the PC version, numerous play options and modifications bring car-tweaking to an art form.

NASCAR Racing's biggest problem is that the game seems tired and outdated compared to what is available for 32-Bit systems now. Graphically, it's mediocre with its Gouraud-shaded, untextured tracks and uninspired backgrounds. Even though the game is designed to be more like a simulation than an arcade racing game, the control is ultra-sensitive, making this game more frustrating than realistic. The utmost care must be taken in cornering, touching other cars and accelerating. One slight digression might cause you to



A major detractor to the game is the bland appearance of the track. As cars move across it, the illusion of movement is not present due to the shading technique used.

bow out of the race or fall way behind.

Overall, the game comes across as having a retro feel both in gameplay and appearance. On the upside, once the controls are mastered and players are used to the outdated look of the game, racing on any one of the official 16 tracks can be entertaining and competitive. In addition, two fantasy tracks have been added to break up the monotony of the ovals.

For a quick-fix arcade racing experience, NASCAR may seem too in-depth and ambitious to the average racing enthusiast. The game is for serious racing-simulation fanatics who enjoy

every facet of racing, including modifications, long races and very sensitive car control. Yet, even with all the variables, it still seems outdated by today's racing-sim standards, particularly those on the PS where racing games are so bountiful.

ig

GRAPHICS:

+/- While the graphics aren't atrocious, they're certainly nothing special.

SOUNDS:

+ Motor noise is exceptional.
+/- If you care, the soundtrack is rooted in '80s retro.

GAMEPLAY:

- Ultra-sensitive car control can become frustrating.
+/- More realistic than most other sims.

LASTING POWER:

+ Racing fans will enjoy the multitude of options for a long time.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

C

B+

C+

C+

C+

Getting close to cars isn't a good idea, as a slight brush will send your car reeling.



Time Commando

Journey through history in Activision's latest action thriller

Publisher: Activision

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Adeline

Release: Now Available

French developer Adeline Software moves away from the open-ended, freeform gameplay of their last game, Relentless, and moves to a completely linear action game in Time Commando, something that could have easily boiled down to a more-complex-than-usual full-motion video game.

Players assume the role of a SAVE agent, thrown back in time by a computer virus that infected the computers of a time-travel machine. As the agent, players must battle through eight time zones to eventually reach the computer core and purge the virus from the system. However, as players progress through the worlds, the virus grows stronger in the present, so players must collect microchips, inexplicably scattered throughout history, and deposit them in a pod, depleting the virus' strength, measured by a meter at the top of the screen. Players navigate



The introductory sequence explains the story of Time Commando, complete with gorgeous rendered graphics. If only the game looked this good...

through the forced-scroll FMV background with their Gouraud-shaded polygon character, with the scroll pausing every now and again for occasional battles with the natives from that time. Unlike many games, players can pick up dropped weapons, an option preferable to the character's fists. Each weapon has multiple attacks, including ranged ones.

Time Commando is a difficult game at first, but becomes easy with practice given the game's linearity and predictability. Graphically, the game looks nice, but one has to wonder why it doesn't look a lot nicer. The few polygons that are in the game

aren't texture-mapped, and since most of the game is FMV, there's plenty of processing power available to spare.

Overall, Time Commando should give players a nice quick fix, but not much more.

ig

GRAPHICS:

+ Good FMV quality.
- Polygonal characters lack detail and textures.

SOUNDS:

+ Enjoyable ambient musical tracks.
- Lots of repetitive sound effects.

GAMEPLAY:

+ Multiple weapons with many attacks.
- Extremely linear and predictable gameplay.

LASTING POWER:

+ Multiple difficulty levels.
- Linear gameplay will likely prevent replay.

OVERALL

AVERAGE

B+

B+

B-

C

B-

As you travel through time, you will come across many types of enemies.



VR Golf

Interplay creates virtually the best 32-Bit golf game available

Publisher: VR Sports

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Gremlin

Release: November

▶ This chase-plane-like camera angle follows the ball as it leaves the club.



a "c"-shaped swing meter that must be clicked twice during each swing to determine the power and hook or slice of the shot. Before using the swing meter,

more in-depth features are available such as choice of shot (normal, chip, pitch, punch) and the ability to change your golfer's stance and aim. Gameplay moves briskly along, and there are no annoying load times to make one of the slowest sports even slower.

VR Golf's graphics are exceptional for a golf game, especially where its camera views are concerned. The courses are comprised of polygons, allowing for the action to be viewed from any angle. There are a ton of vantage points, including split-screen cameras that allow you to view the action from two spots at once.

The only major flaw in this game is that only two courses are available. This is a shame, considering that it's a major blemish on an otherwise great title. Interplay does hope to release an inexpensive course disk, however. Overall, despite the lack of courses, VR Golf is still well worth checking out, and is easily the best VR Sports game to date.



▶ The 3-D rendered courses look great, although the golfer could have been more detailed.

GRAPHICS:

- + Excellent camera angles
- Golfers look a little low-colored and unconvincing

SOUNDS:

- + In-game announcer is solid, and the sounds are about average

GAMEPLAY:

- + Great golf simulation that doesn't get boring or bogged down.

LASTING POWER:

- + Large amount of game styles lengthens the game's life.
- ...which is good since it only has two courses.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

B+

B

A

B+

B+

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Black Dawn

Virgin's idea of
Choplifter for the
'90s generation

Publisher: Virgin

Platform: Sony PlayStation

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Black Ops

Release: Now Available

▶ Ahh, beautiful New York City...Now let's go blow the living hell out of it!



Black Dawn, the latest arcade-style flight simulator to hit the PlayStation, has undergone a few changes since last issue's preview. The gameplay is mostly unchanged, with the player in control of a fortified helicopter gunship performing airstrikes in several theatres around the world, but now the game features improved explosion effects, and a much steeper difficulty curve.

For those who missed our preview, Black Dawn is pure intensity, pitting the player against innumerable foes, both airborne and ground-based. Fortunately for you, your gunship carries more munitions than you could find in the arsenals of many third world nations...and you're going to need just about all of it to effectively battle the enemies. Control of your chopper is definitely more arcade-like rather



▶ Every gamer knows there's nothing better than watching your enemies go down in a ball of flames. Black Ops made sure explosions were intense.

than realistic, and the frame rate is fairly high, although when you have five or six bogeys firing at you while being pelted by AAA, the game can slow down somewhat. Pop-up, the demon that plagued the similar chopper thriller, Thunderstrike 2, is thankfully minimized with a convincing fog effect. Saving your game is performed by recording a four-digit password—unfortunately though, the game does not support the PlayStation's memory card save capabilities.

Overall, the game is a very solid addition to the expanding genre, with its incredible action, movie-esque soundtrack, and its

sheer adrenaline level. Those waiting for the next Air Combat or Thunderstrike title won't go wrong checking this one out, as Black Ops Entertainment has delivered a highly explosive, action-packed winner.

GRAPHICS:

- + Speedy frame rate.
- Some slowdown when things get hot.

SOUNDS:

- + Great soundtrack and very good sound effects.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Solid arcade-style chopper-jockey thrills.
- A plethora of buttons takes time to memorize.

LASTING POWER:

- + Game is fairly hard to master, but experienced helicopter-sim fanatics should have no problem with it.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

B+

A

B

B+

B+

Daytona USA

Sega's arcade
hit speeds onto
PC highways

Publisher: Sega Entertainment

Platform: PC

Format: Single CD-ROM

Developer: Sega AM2

Release: Now Available



▶ Like the arcade, there are a few camera views to choose.



If any one of Sega's games is a natural for a port over to PC, Daytona USA is it. As one of Sega's top sellers for the Saturn, Daytona packs a lot of action and excellent gameplay into a neat, easy-to-learn package. Sega's newly formed PC division has taken it, added a few bonus options, sharpened up the graphics and packaged it for the Windows crowd.

Tested on a Pentium 100 with 32 Meg of Ram and a graphic accelerator board, the game was given the best of everything to prove itself. Yet, even with the voluminous power it still ran just a little slow in Full-screen Mode. When bounced down to half-screen the game ran very well, almost identical to the Saturn only with much cleaner graphics and less clipping (pop-up).

No surprises in the gameplay

▶ Daytona USA for the PC looks almost identical to the Sega Saturn version, with the same graphics, music, sounds and annoying "Day-ee-toe-nuhhhhh" announcer.

department. Surprisingly the game control was best when the keyboard controls were used. Also tested were the Microsoft Sidewinder, which performed nicely if players want to use a joystick for the race sim, and the Gravis Grip Pad which made turning too abruptly, extreme and sharp, sacrificing most of the car control.

Views, tracks and music are all identical to the Saturn version keeping the Beginner, Advanced and Expert levels. Car selection is still limited to two for Arcade Mode and four in the PC Mode. Also present are the Mirror Option, which allows players to race the tracks backwards, and the Horse Mode, if galloping down the raceway is desired.

Considering this game was running in Windows, it did a heck of a job keeping up the pace while coexisting with the power-hungry program.

Daytona can definitely hold its own when compared to

what's available for the PC in the racing category, and PC enthusiasts may be surprised at the level of depth and gameplay present in this game. It may not be the most realistic racing sim available, but for sheer fun and arcade gameplay, it's tough to beat Daytona no matter what platform it's on.

GRAPHICS:

- + A marked improvement over Saturn Daytona, with less pop-up and somewhat smoother animation.

SOUNDS:

- +/- Great engine noise as usual but the singing guy has got to go.

GAMEPLAY:

- + Traditional fun, arcade-style racing.
- Nothing much added since the Saturn version.

LASTING POWER:

- +/- Plenty of challenge, and lots of options.

OVERALL

RECOMMENDED

B

B-

B+

B

B

A summary of the ratings given to games reviewed in past issues of IG.

NEW THIS MONTH

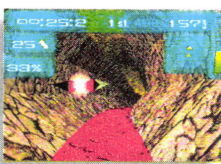
Die Hard Trilogy (PS)



A- B A- A- A-

Finally, a movie-licensed game that is actually fun to play. This three-in-one package has separate games representing each *Die Hard* movie. Included is an isometric shooter, a fantastic Virtua Cop-like scene and a destructive race in a cab.

Starwinder (PS)



D+ C D+ D+ D+

Starwinder is a badly conceived futuristic racing game that takes place in tubes suspended in space. The game is repetitious, boring and has sub-par graphics to boot. This isn't even mentioning the annoying overuse of full-motion video.

NCAA GameBreaker (PS)



B B B+ B+ B+

This game might have been more aptly named "Turbo GameDay" since it uses essentially the same game engine, but moves at about five times the speed. Regardless, it's an entertaining title, and is a must for college football fans.

World Series II (SAT)



B+ B+ A- A A-

There aren't a whole lot of additions to this latest offering, but frankly, not a whole lot were needed. A few new viewing angles, improved speech, a better interface and more seasonal features make this the premiere Sega Sports title.

Z (PC)



B+ B- B+ B+ B+

With the market being flooded with so many realtime war simulations, it is a welcome surprise to see that "Z" holds its own. With well-detailed, high-res graphics, this addictive game is a must for fans of the genre.

IG REVIEWS

Nintendo 64

PilotWings 64
Saikyo Habu Shogi
Super Mario 64

A+ B+ A- A- A-
D C A B B
A+ A A+ A+ A+

PlayStation

Andretti Racing
Bogey: Dead 6
Bust-A-Move 2: Arcade Ed.
ChoroQ
Crash Bandicoot
Darkstalkers
Double Dragon

A- A- A A- A-
B+ C- B C B
B B+ A A B+
B- B B+ A- B+
A B- C- B B-
A B+ B+ A- A-
B- C+ C- D C

The Final Round
Floating Runner
Galaxian 3
Goal Storm
Horned Owl
International Track & Field
Irem Arcade Classics
Johnny Bazookatone
Jumping Flash! 2
Killing Zone
King's Field
Krazy Ivan
Madden NFL '97
Motor Toon Grand Prix 2
Namco Museum Vol. 3
NBA Shootout
Olympic Soccer
Olympic Summer Games
Project Overkill
The Raven Project
Resident Evil
Return Fire
Ridge Racer Revolution
RoboPit
Spot Goes to Hollywood
Star Gladiator
Street Fighter Alpha 2
Street Fighter Alpha
Tekken 2
Tetris X
Tobal No. 1
Tokyo Highway Battle
Toshinden 2
Triple Play '97
VR Soccer '96
Worms

Graphics Sounds Gameplay Lasting Power Overall
A B A+ B A-
B- B+ D C C-
B+ B- B- D C+
B B+ A- A- B+
B B B+ B B
A B C B- B
D C B- C C+
B+ A- A- B B+
B A- B+ B- B+
C+ B- C- C C-
B- C- D- C- C
A- B- B+ C B
B+ B A A A-
B+ B+ A A A-
C- D A A- B+
A A- A A A
C+ B+ A B B
C C+ A- B C+
B- B- C- B C+
B+ B C- D+ C-
B B B- B+ B
A- A+ B- B+ A-
A- A A- A- A-
B C C+ B C+
B- C+ D+ C+ C-
A- B B+ B+ B+
B B+ A- A- A-
C+ B- A- A- B
A A+ A+ A+ A+
D C- D D D
B B B+ B+ B+
B- B- B- C C+
A- A- A- A- A-
B+ A- A- A- A-
B+ B- C- B- C
C+ C+ A+ A+ B+

Saturn

Baku-Baku
Darius 2
Decathlete
Earthworm Jim 2
F1 Challenge
Golden Axe
Guardian Heroes
Hyper 3D Pinball
Iron Storm
Johnny Bazookatone
King of Fighters '95
The Legend of Oasis
Madden NFL '97
MegaMan X3
Metal Black
Mortal Kombat II
NiGHTS
NightWarriors
Saturn Bomberman
Shining Wisdom
Skeleton Warriors
Victory Goal '96
Virtua Fighter Kids
WipeOut
Worms
X-Men: COTA

B- C+ B+ B+ B-
B- A B B+ B
A B+ C+ C+ B
B+ A- B+ A- B+
C+ B B+ B+ B+
B+ C+ B- B+ B-
B+ A- B+ A A-
C- C C- A- C+
B C+ A- A- B+
B+ A- A- B B+
A- B A- A A-
A A A+ A- A
B B A A B+
B- B+ B+ C+ B
B A- B+ B- B+
B- C+ C B- B-
A A+ B+ B- A-
A A- A+ A A
B+ B+ A A A-
C+ B- B+ B B
A A- C- C+ B
A B A A A
A A B+ B- B+
B- A- A B- B
C+ C+ A+ A+ B+
A B+ B+ A- B+

IG RATINGS:

A+: Revolutionary B+ / B-: Recommended C- / D+ / D: Below Average
A / A-: Highly Recommended B- / C+ / C: Average D- / F: Poor

Further proof that Japanese gamers have it all, Sega's new series gives gamers the chance to

Travel Back In Time With Sega Ages

Take the word "Sega." Now, spell it backward. "Ages." Finally, put the two words together: "Sega Ages." Brilliant, isn't it? That's what Sega of Japan's marketing people must have been saying the morning that they thought up the concept for their new arcade classics series for the Saturn, Sega Ages.

Currently, there are five Sega Ages titles scheduled in Japan for 1996, and all five are pixel-perfect replications of the original arcade games. Each disc sells between 3,800 and 4,800 yen (roughly \$35-45) and contains only one game per disc. Some might say it's a steep price to pay for a single game that takes up about 1/240th of a compact disc, but most gamers in Japan will pay just about anything for a perfect arcade port, especially one that hasn't been seen in years. If Sega of America were to bring these titles out in the U.S. (and while no plans have yet been made, we're hoping to hear something soon), they'd have to either sell them somewhere in the range of \$19-24, or compile them all onto one CD and sell it for at the very most \$50.

The first and fifth games in the series (as of Sept. 27, only the first four are out) are action-puzzle quiz games that aren't worth mentioning, but the second, third and fourth games are arcade legends, both here and in Japan. The second game in the series, released early this summer, is the revolutionary 3-D shooting game, Space Harrier.

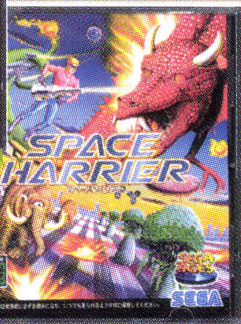
Space Harrier was a major breakthrough for its time, as it was the first "3-D" shooting game ever. In the game, you take control of a flying warrior with a powerful blaster

through multiple stages of enemy ships and creatures. The bosses in Space Harrier are some of the coolest bosses imaginable (or at least they were back then, anyway), and the difficulty is fairly high, offering enough challenge to keep the quarters empty.

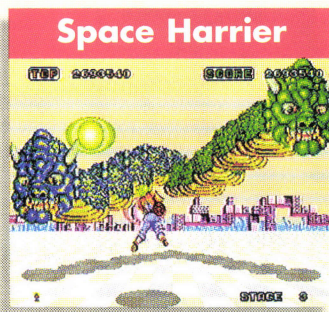
The third game, released in mid-September, is OutRun, the classic driving hit from 1986. OutRun is unique in that it contains both the original Japanese arcade game and the more widespread overseas version. All of the original arcade music is intact, as are new arranged tunes exclusive to the Saturn version, and the gameplay is 100 percent true to the arcade, with all of the arcade driving tricks present.

Finally, the fourth game in the series, After Burner II, was released on Sept. 27, and contains all of the adrenaline-pumping flight action of the arcade original, with even the arcade's hidden messages kept intact in the Saturn version. Containing full support for both the Mission Stick and the 3D Control Pad, After Burner II perfectly replicates the feel of the coin-op original.

While they may appeal more to an older audience, Sega of Japan must be commended for bringing these classics home in perfect form. Now, if only SOA would do it, U.S. gamers would be in for a treat.



The three best Sega Ages arcade rereleases for the Sega Saturn:



Space Harrier returns in an even more perfect arcade translation than 1994's nice, although short-lived 32X version. With analog support, the control is as tight and responsive as could be.



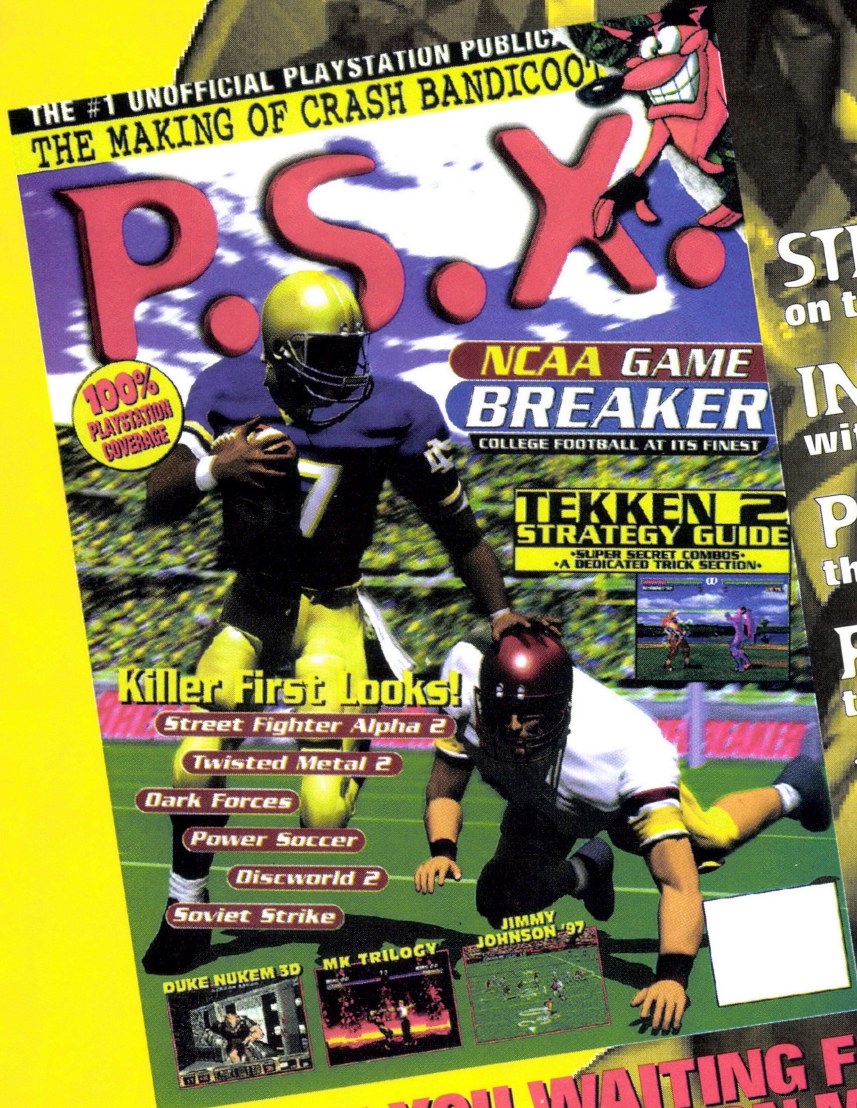
Ahh, OutRun. The one game where you and your girlfriend could flip the car a dozen times and crash into 13 different road obstacles without getting a scratch. What a life...



Easily one of the most popular arcade games of all time, After Burner II is totally perfect on the Saturn, with every pixel from the arcade replicated identically, plus analog support.

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The U.S. Super Mario 64!

Nintendo gives American gamers a treat as the U.S. version of Mario 64 tops the Japan original!

This month in EndNotes we thought we'd bring you the first hands-on info about the U.S. Super Mario 64, which we received in our offices just hours before this issue went to press.

Nintendo of America decided to make good use of the three months time between the Japanese and American releases of Super Mario 64, by taking the oft-untraveled route of American game companies and actually *adding* to the game, with a host of small enhancements to the gameplay, and a large amount of new voices and sounds.

Since we've only had the game for less than a day, and we've had very little time to play it (deadline sucks), we've only been able to play for a short time, but even so, in that little time, we've found lots of changes.

First and foremost, Princess Toadstool now has a voice (played by none other than *Nintendo Power's* Leslie Swan), and she reads her letter aloud in the introduction to the game. After you start, Mario not only says

the trademark "It's-a-me, Mario!," but he also says, "Hello!" "Press Start to Play!" and when choosing your file, "Okey-dokey!" Also, when you choose a particular star he says "Let's-a-go!" (For those of you wondering the significance of all this, he doesn't say any of those phrases in the Japanese version, except for the first one.)

When Mario falls asleep, he says, "I'm-a-tired," and then starts napping. Moments later, he begins to mumble in his sleep things like "ahhh, spaghetti," or "ahhh, ravioli." When throwing Bowser off of the platform, he yells, "So long there, Bowser!!" Cool.

Other than some clipping problems that were fixed (like the Chomp on Course 1), we didn't find many gameplay changes yet. The Red Coins have new sounds, which raise in pitch with each new coin obtained, and some graphical enhancements were made (like making the Course 3 painting more significant to the Course).

Great job Nintendo!



Princess Toadstool now has a voice, played by none other than *Nintendo Power's* Leslie Swan

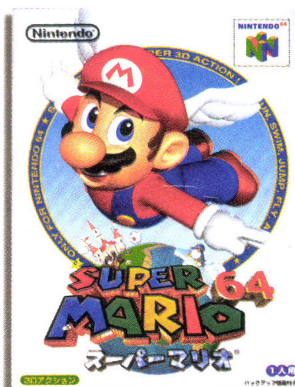


ig

✓ Nintendo added many small enhancements, like this improved painting for Course 3, to further perfect an already near-perfect game.



✓ The U.S. Mario 64 packaging (bottom) has even nicer artwork and design than the somewhat plain Japanese original, a true rarity nowadays.



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**AFTER HEIHACHI WAS DEFEATED IN THE FIRST TEKKEN
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THEY SHOULD HAVE FOUND A STEEPER CLIFF.



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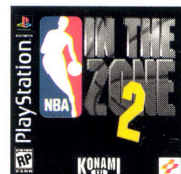


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